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The Folk Elements in Hindu Culture

B K Sarkar

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The present work is based on a study of the *Folk Arts, Folk traditions, Folk songs and Folk festivals* of India in general and Eastern India in particular. During the last few decades considerable research has been bestowed on Indian vernaculars from the philological and historical point of view and scholars have been able to throw new light on political, linguistic, social and religious developments. But, yet a systematic work utilizing these vernacular evidence has to be attempted.

The book is mainly a study of the relations between *Shaiva-cum-Shaktaism and Buddhism,* both discriptive and historical. The evidences have been derived from a first hand exploration of oral traditions and *Folklore* as well as from manuscripts. According to the author, the terms Hinduism, Brahamanism and Buddhism etc., are very ambiguous and more or less misnomers. Thus it is difficult to distinguish between the images of the Gods and Goddesses belonging to Buddhist and non - Buddhistic pantheons of Hinduism.

The book is a very interesting study on the *Folk* institutions and cultures of India and is bound to be of much interest to both scholars and students on the subject.

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THE FOLK-ELEMENT
IN
HINDU CULTURE

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THE FOLK-ELEMENT

IN

HINDU CULTURE

A CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDIES
IN HINDU FOLK-INSTITUTIONS

BY

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR, M.A.

Professor, National Council of Education, Bengal; Translator of *Sukraniti* (Hindu Economics and Politics), and Author of *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*; *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes*;

ASSISTED BY

HEMENDRA K. RAKSHIT, B.A. (WISCONSIN)

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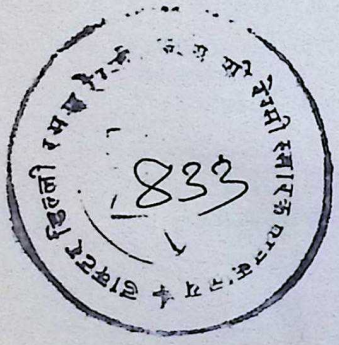

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TO

THE FOLK-INDIA OF ALL AGES

THIS SMALL WORK

IS DEDICATED

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PREFACE

THE present work is based on a study of some of the folk-arts, folk-traditions, folk-songs and folk-festivals of Bengal. It is to a certain extent complementary to the author's *Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*, in which the object has been to focus the attention on the socio-economic and socio-political aspects of Hindu Culture.

In the reconstruction of Indian history, modern scholarship has to be devoted more and more to the exposition of the influence that the masses of the country have ever exerted in the making of its civilization. It is a sign of the times that with this has been felt the need of greater recourse to vernacular literature as an important source of information.

During the last decade or so considerable research has been bestowed on Indian vernaculars, from the philological and the historical points of view. Marathi, Hindi, Tamil and Bengali scholars have been able thus to throw new light on political, linguistic, social and religious developments. A systematic work utilizing these vernacular evidences has yet to be attempted.

It has not been the aim of the present writer to compile such a comprehensive treatise. His scope, on the contrary, is quite limited. *The Folk-Element in Hindu Culture* is mainly a study of the relations

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between Shaiva-cum-Shâktaism and Buddhism, both descriptive and historical, obtaining among the Bengali-speaking population of Eastern India. He has in contemplation to bring out later a parallel monograph on the folk-institutions and folk-minstrels of the Vaiṣṇava Cult.

The evidences have been derived from a first-hand exploration of oral tradition and folk-lore, as well as from mediæval Bengali literature, especially from old MSS. The author is indebted to the work of the folk-lorists associated with the literary academies of Bengal, e.g. the Bangîya Sâhitya Pariṣat of Calcutta, Sâhitya Pariṣat of Rangpur, Sâhitya Pariṣat of Dâcca, and the like.

The author is fortunate in having secured the assistance of Mr. Haridâs Pâlit, of the District Council of National Education, Malda, who for over a quarter of a century has been collecting information as to popular life, faith, arts, crafts, songs, ceremonies, etc., in Râdha and Varedran, the Western and Northern districts of Bengal—those regions especially which had been the centres of political and cultural greatness in mediæval times. Mr. Pâlit is now in possession of several hundred old MSS., in the Bengali, Ooriya and Sanskrit languages, and he has written out notes of his studies which now amount to several volumes of considerable size. These volumes of notes may be looked upon as parts of a history of Bengal *as spoken by the village folk*, since in them are recorded faithfully the traditions and sentiments of the people about themselves, their localities, their neighbours and their past. A portion of Mr. Pâlit's notes has been published in the form of articles in Bengali reviews, and also as a book which has been liberally drawn upon for this work.

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In his presidential address to the Folklore Society of London, Prof. R. R. Marett read a paper entitled *Folklore and Psychology*, in which he remarked: "To be a folklorist worthy of the name you must first have undergone initiation amongst the folk, must have become one of them inwardly and in the spirit". In the introduction to his historical work, *Âdyer Gambhîrâ*, Mr. Pâlit gives an account of his folklorist career and methods, from which it would appear that he has had that "initiation amongst the folk" of which Dr. Marett speaks. Says Mr. Pâlit :—

"It was in the month of Vaiśhâkha (April-May) that I first entered Malda. Shortly after my arrival here, the Gambhîrâ festivities were started on the Bâro-iyârî-talâ (a place set apart for public amusement at public cost) of Mokdumpur. I witnessed them and felt myself quite charmed by the grand ideas underlying these festivities. . . .

"It was the stream of novel ideas and sentiments started within me by witnessing the Gambhîrâ that prompted me to collect materials for writing the history of Malda. And it was while engaged in this task that the glorious pictures of old Gauḍa and Pundra Vardhana were conjured up before and dazzled my mental eyes. The more the Gambhîrâ has unfolded itself before me, the more have I enjoyed the music of the legends and stories of these places, and felt myself irresistibly inclined to look for its gamut. This search has put me in possession of many MSS.

"For about twenty long years, however, my sole enjoyment was confined to tracing the rivers and traversing the woods, travelling about the lake-like tanks and seeing the (old dilapidated) forts, listening to legends and stories from the lips of illiterate villagers

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and collecting the varied materials of history. During this period never did I cherish the hope nor did I ever entertain the wish that I should ever enter the literary world as a writer. It was to satisfy my own curiosity that I thus looked for materials of history, and it was to refresh my own memory that I jotted down notes."

The author of the present brochure, based mainly on Mr. Pâlit's notes and writings, regards this small volume as a result of preliminary spadework in the Data of Hindu Sociology. He has, therefore, avoided comparisons and interpretations excepting in a few places only to elucidate the topics dealt with. The following observations, however, may be recorded here :

1. The masses and the folk have contributed to the making of Hindu Culture in all its phases no less than the court and the classes.

2. Secular, material and social interests, as contrasted with the other-worldly and spiritual ideals, have had considerable influence in moulding Hindu life and thought.

3. The caste-system has never been a disintegrating factor in Hindu communal existence, and is most probably a very recent institution.

4. Hinduism is an eclectic and ever-expansive socio-religious system built up through the assimilation of diverse ethnic, natural and spiritual forces during the successive ages of Indian history.

5. There has ever been an attempt to govern the folk-customs, popular faith, image-worship and public festivals by the transcendental conceptions of the Divinity of Man and the Transitoriness of this World. The folklore of the Hindus is nothing but the adaptation of their metaphysical culture-lore to the instincts and aptitudes of the "man in the street" ; or, obversely,

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the interpenetration of the grosser systems of thought and activity with the conceptions of a higher system of Life-values and Life-attitudes.

6. The religious beliefs, practices and customs of the people are fundamentally the same in *San goku* (or the three countries, viz. India, China and Japan). What pass for Buddhism in the lands of Confucius and the Shintō Cult are but varieties of the same faith that is known as Tantric and Purânic Hinduism in the land of Buddha. The reasons are not only to be found in the intercourse between the three countries both by land and sea during the Tâng-Sung period of Chinese history, the Augustan age of culture in the Middle Kingdom (7th-13th cent.), synchronous with the Vardhana-Pâla-Chola epoch of Indian history, and the Nârâ-Kâmâkurâ epoch of Japanese, but also probably in the common mentality that characterizes the Asiatic peoples.

To maintain the character of this work as a contribution to general Sociology, it has been thought undesirable to give copious details and dates of Indian political history. It need be remarked, however, that the chronology and identity of most of the mediæval works and authors are yet anything but finally settled. With regard to the authorities consulted the following rules have been observed:

1. To give the complete translations of extracts from MSS. in the body of the book.

2. To refer to and quote from only such works published in Bengali as are easily accessible.

3. To refrain from giving chapter and verse in the case of standard authorities, especially in instances where the historical facts are very well known.

The author has gleaned facts and ideas from the following:

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1. Dr. Râjendralâl Mitra's *Antiquities of Orissa* and *Indo-Aryans.*

2. The writings of Mahâmahopâdhyâya Haraprasâd Sâstri, in "The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal" (Calcutta); and of Dr. Waddell in the J.R.A.S. (London).

3. Mr. Vincent Smith's *Early History of India.*

4. Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Dâs's *Indian Pundits in the Land of Snow.*

5. Mr. Dineschandra Sen's *History of Bengali Language and Literature.*

6. Mr. Nagendranâth Vasu's *Vishwakoṣa* ("Encyclopædia Indica" in Bengali), *Modern Buddhism* and, *Archæological Survey of Mayurbhanj.*

7. The works or articles of Dr. Râdhâkumud Mookerji, author of *Indian Shipping;* Dr. A. K. Coomâraswâmy, the art-historian and art-critic; Prof. Râkhâldâs Banerji, of the Indian Museum, Calcutta; Mr. Narendra Nâth Law, M.A., B.L.; Prof. Rabindranârâyan Ghosh, of the Dawn Society, Calcutta; and Mr. Manomohan Chakravarti, M.A., B,L., of the Provincial Civil Service, Bengal.

8. The contributions of Messrs. Akshay Kumâr Maitra, B.L., and Ramâprasâd Chanda, B.A., of the Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi; Mr. Naliniranjan Pandit, of Nadia; Mr. Yogendranâth Gupta, author of *Vikramapura;* Mr. Kumudnâth Lâhiri, of Moorshidabad; Mr. Nalini Kânta Bhattasâlî, M.A., of the Dacca Museum, Dacca; Mr. Binod Behârî Rai, of Rajshahi; the late Râdhes Chandra Seth, B.L., and Pandits Rajanikânta Chakravarti and Vidhu Sekhar Sâstri, of Malda; and of other students of Bengalee Culture, published in vernacular monthlies, e.g. "Bangadarshana," "Sâhitya," "Pravâsî," "Grihastha," "Mânasî,"

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"Pratibhâ," "Sammilan," "Bangîya Sâhitya Pariṣat Patrikâ," "Rangpur Sâhitya Pariṣat Patrikâ," etc.

The author is personally indebted to Prof. Râdhâkamal Mukerjee, M.A., of Krisnath College, Moorshidabad, and Mr. Hemchandra Das Gupta, B.M.E. (Michigan), of the District Council of National Education, Malda, who, in the course of their educational work among the rural folk of the country, have been able to collect some interesting data of their social life; and also to Mr. Kumudini Kânta Ganguli, B.A., of Dacca, who has been of great help in explaining old Bengali and archaic expressions occurring in the salutation-hymns and other MSS.

The work owes its present form to many sources as has been indicated above, but to none more than to Mr. Hemendra Kishor Rakshit, B.A. (Wisconsin, U.S.A.).

It has to be added that portions of this book have been published as articles in "The Modern World" (Madras), "The Vedic Magazine" (Hardwar), and "The Collegian" (Calcutta).

A word in conclusion as to the diacritical marks :

Â, â = long *a*; Ṇ, ṇ = cerebral *n*; both illustrated in the word Purâṇa.

Sh, sh = palatal *s*; e.g. Shiva.

Ṣ, ṣ = cerebral *s*; e.g. Akṣobhya.

Î, î = *ee*; e.g. Kâlî.

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR.

THE MIDDLE-WEST, U.S.A.,
April 15, 1915.

P.S.—Gambhîrâ, the main theme of this work, has been a matter of personal knowledge to the author for the last twenty years. In its present form the work,

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small as it is, was conceived in India in 1913, and written out partly in England in 1914 and partly in America in 1915. During the last few years there have been several publications on allied subjects, of which the most important are:

1. *Vaiṣṇavism, Shaivaism and Minor Religious Systems*, by Sir R. G. Bhândârkâr ("The Encyclopædia of Indo-Aryan Research," Strassburg, 1913).

2. *The Bodhisattva Titsâng (Jizo) in China and Japan*, by M. W. De Visser in "The Ostasiatische Zeitschrift" (July, 1913—December, 1914, Berlin).

3. *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, by Mrs. A. Getty (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1914).

4. *Kashmir Shaivaism*, by J. C. Chatterji (Srinagar, Kashmir, India, 1914).

5. *The Tantra of the Great Liberation*, and 6. *Hymns to the Goddess*, by Avalon (Luzac & Co., London, 1914).

7. H. P. Sâstri's contributions on Mediæval Buddhism to the Bengali monthly "The Nârâyaṇa" (1915).

Among archæological works may be mentioned the third edition of Vincent Smith's *Early History of India* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1914), in which the author has drawn prominent attention to the achievements of the Pâla Emperors and their successors the Senas in making Bengal "a great power" in India (A.D. 800-1200); and *The Pâlas of Bengal* (Memoir of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1915), and *Bângâlâr Itihâsa* (Calcutta, 1915) or "History of Bengal" (—A.D. 1200), written in Bengali language, both by Râkhâldâs Banerji, who has thrown a flood of light on the international relations of the Bengalees with the other peoples of India during a period which will remain obscure for a considerable time

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yet. The race-intermixture and socio-religious transformation effected by military-political revolutions in Eastern India can be easily deduced from the inscriptions and other evidences on which these three works are based.

The following three historical novels in Bengali published at Calcutta during 1915 also furnish sidelights on the subject-matter dealt with in the present volume :

1. *Shashâmka*—by Râkhâldâs Banerji, dealing with life and thought in Bengal in the 7th century A.D.

2. *Dharmapâla*—by R. D. Banjeri, dealing with life and thought in Bengal in the 9th century A.D.

3. *Chândelî*—by Haridâs Pâlit, dealing with life and thought in Bengal in the 12th century A.D.

To those who are unfamiliar with the names of the gods and goddesses of the people of India, *The Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* (Harrap, London, 1912), by Sister Niveditâ and Dr. Coomâraswâmy, with illustrations by painters of the Nationalist School of Indian Art, may be recommended.

The terms Hinduism, Brâhmaṇism, Buddhism, etc., are very ambiguous and more or less misnomers. These have been discussed in the author's latest work, *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes : A Study in the Tendencies of Asiatic Mentality* (Shanghai, 1916). The following is an extract from it :

" The Buddhism that came into the land of Confucius was thus only one of the expressions of the comprehensive cult of Love and Romanticism which manifested itself at the same time in the promulgation of the worship of Viṣṇu, Krisna, Shiva, etc. And the same religious emotionalism was being exploited by sculptors to enrich their Buddhist or Shaiva arts

" This common origin it is which makes it often so

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difficult to distinguish between the images of the gods and goddesses belonging to the Buddhistic and non-Buddhistic pantheons of Hinduism. This is why Chinese, Korean and Japanese forms of Buddhism look so similar to the many varieties of present-day Indian religion in spite of modifications under the trans-Himâlayan soil and race-characteristics. This is why, in spite of the disappearance of Buddha as a god from Indian consciousness, Buddhism may be said to live in and through the other cults of modern Hinduism, e.g. Vaisnavism, Shaivaism, Jainism, etc."

It has also been pointed out in that work that each of these mediæval and modern *isms* of India, China and Japan are the joint products of the following three factors :

" 1. The Cult of World-Forces common to the Vedists (*Rita*ist), pre-Confucian Chinese (*Tâo*ist) and the worshippers of *Kâmi* (*Shinto*ist).

" 2. The Religion of Love and Romanticism which grew out of the first. This was born almost simultaneously in India and China as the worship of saints, *avatâras*, heroes, Nature-Powers, etc., with the help of images ; and transferred to the Land of the *Kâmi* in the very first stage of its history, where it found a most congenial soil, and where the race-consciousness might have developed it independently.

" 3. The Religion of the Folk which was the parent of the first two has ever been active in creating, adapting and re-interpreting local and racial myths of the three countries down to present day."

B. K. S.

North China,
March 9, 1916.

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CHAPTER I.

A FESTIVAL OF THE PEOPLE.

It has been well said that a new country is a *problem*, but that an old country is a *study*. Of no old region is this more true than of India. The complex web of Indian life and culture with its historic background of hoary past presents rites, ceremonies, customs, and institutions which well-nigh defy the attempts of the anthropologist, sociologist, or the philosophical historian at anything like a systematic and satisfactory account of their sources and careers. Each institution bears presumably the influence of a diverse character, e.g. that left by the evolutionary or historic progress of the past, that due to the impact of the surrounding social and physical forces, as well as the special mark impressed upon it through the peculiar genius of the race among which it flourishes or the particular character of its habitat. For a proper interpretation of the institutions and practices obtaining in India at the present day the scientist has thus to lay under contribution the data of archæology, ecology, as well as ethnology.

But the study of Indian social facts and phenomena is yet in its nonage. We are yet in the stage of collecting materials about the manifold aspects of our socio-economic, socio-religious, and socio-political usages and theories. The science of Indian sociology is only in the making. At this stage of our social inquiry, therefore, it would be quite unscientific to pass serious judg-

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ments, or, at any rate, anything but tentative and provisional or hypothetical remarks, on any of the institutions that have obtained currency in the past or are influencing life and thought in the present. The same tentative, provisional or hypothetical character should also really pertain to the conclusions of what in Europe and America have been passing for the science of sociology. It bespeaks an unscientific or prepossessed turn of mind to speak of a certain people as the chosen race of God or to assert that certain manly virtues are the monopoly of a certain coloured people on the strength of social studies confined within certain boundaries of the Western world. The interests of humanity and comparative literature, philosophy, art and sociology require the inhibition of preconceived notions about colour, race or climate.

A study of the data of Indian sociology would supply a parallax to correct the one-sided or biased ideas about the truths of the human world. The materials thus furnished would not only place Indian social life in its proper perspective, but also prepare the way for the universal sociology of man according to the principles of the inductive-historical method.

It is the object of this chapter to place some of the past and present facts and theories in connexion with the worship of Shiva. The development of the Shaiva-cum-Shâkta cult has had a varied course in Indian history, having its special features imprinted on it according as it has prevailed among the Andhras, Cholas, Marathas, Rajputs, Punjabis, Kashmiris and Bengalees. It is with the Bengalee phase of this all-India institution that we are concerned here. The Bengalee socio-religious festival of modern times (called Gambhîrâ in certain districts of North Bengal, or Gâjan in Râdha or Western Bengal, or Nîla in East Bengal) that attends the worship

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of the gods of Shaiva pantheon, is being treated under the following heads: (1) Theory or philosophy of the socio-religious institution; (2) Geography or ethnography of the institution; (3) History of the institution; and (4) The institution as an instrument of national culture.

Section I.—Theory of the Institution.

All the affairs of the Hindu are directly or indirectly connected with religion. He feels no interest and cannot induce himself to join in any work that does not seem to him to possess any religious merit. It is generally seen, however, that people are not disposed to undertake any religious work purely for the sake of the work itself without any reference to personal gain or loss. Very rare is the case where a person will be found to practise religious observances disinterestedly, and equally rare is the case where the pursuit of religion will be found to have a place among the inviolable duties of man. With man, self-interest is the mainspring of action, and no work which will not appear to serve it will be able to kindle his interest or earnestness. It is for this that although the Gambhîrâ is a religious institution its organizers are found to pay great attention to their secular interests.

The devotion to Shiva and his worship is broad-based upon the hearts of the people. Somehow or other it has come to be generally believed that of all gods Shiva is the most easily propitiated and pleased to grant the desires of his devotees. This will be clearly borne out by a study of the popular story concerning Shiva and how he is pleased that is recited and listened to with rapt attention in the night (called Shivarâtri) of the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month of Phâlgoon.[1]

[1] February-March

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The Shivarâtâ (now made in honour of Shiva, as narrated in the legend concerning Vâṇa) is a bright record of the blessings that one will obtain for his devotion to Shiva, and it has vouchsafed to his devotees happiness in this world and salvation in the next. These are found to be the chief incentives for the worship of this god.

The Gambhîrâ is thus included in the worship that is offered with a view to the realization of certain objects or the attainment of particular blessings, i.e. it is what is called sakâma (as opposed to niṣkâma that is practised for its own sake). It is believed that as a result of observing the ceremonies making up the Gambhîrâ worship as Bhakta or Sannyâsin, the observer is rewarded with a sound and healthy body through the grace of Shiva. Hence it is that the Bhaktas are found to put on many different masks and thus play various parts in the Gambhîrâ with the object and hope of securing thereby the pleasure and grace of the god. Those who join the Gambhîrâ festivities, after having themselves mentally vowed to them, hope thereby for the realization of some particular object but do not in the least look forward to mokṣa (i.e. final emancipation). Little boys and girls are made to dance before the image of Shiva in the Gambhîrâ temple. Their parents allow this in the happy belief that they will thereby secure the grace of the god in the shape of health and longevity of life. There is another class of Bhaktas or Sannyâsis who dance and sing in the Gambhîrâ not from any religious motive but simply for the sake of the æsthetic or vulgar pleasure. These belong to the class of Tâmasika (ignorant or following the gross principle) worshippers.

Shiva enjoys the Gambhîrâ festivities with his wife and the other members of his family. Other gods also grace the Gambhîrâ on this occasion with their

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presence, and on the eve of their departure from there, confer their blessings on the Bhaktas. On all the days of these festivities, especially on the last day when the Âhârâ worship takes place, and, as is popularly believed, when all the gods numbering thirty-three crores [1] come there to attend the farewell dinner, it is strictly forbidden to cross the Gambhîrâ courtyard with one's shoes on or with one's umbrella spread over one's head.

Section II.—Geography of the Institution.

Festivals like these, in which dance, music and songs, as well as feasts, processions and social gatherings play a prominent part, are held in almost every district of Bengal.

The name, however, is not the same in all the centres. The Gambhîrâ of Malda is found to have been transformed into the Gâjan of Râdha or West Bengal. Again the Gâjan is found to have been split in two—Dharma's Gâjan and Shiva's Gâjan. Even in the Râdha country, and not very long ago, the name Gambhîrâ connoted all the festivities that the Gâjan now does. Even now in one of the Gâjan songs we have "Bholâ Maheshwara is in the gambhîrâ"

The Gâjan festivities are still held in Malda, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Pabna, Faridpur, Moorshidabad, Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Hughli, Nadia, the 24 Parganas and in many other districts.

The Chaitra [2] festivities of Orissa under the name Sâhiyâtrâ are but another edition of the Gambhîrâ festivities. These festivities are also held in the Midnapore district.

It is clear that the Gambhîrâ is not restricted to any

[1] Ten millions = 1 crore. [2] March-April.

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particular district, but belongs to the whole of Bengal and Orissa.

Nay, we may go farther and say that it extends even to Assam and Burma, the modern Buddhist festivities of these regions bearing a close resemblance to those of the Gambhîrâ.

In Bhutan also festivities like those of the Gambhîrâ are observed after expiry of the summer season. Here for one full fortnight music and dance are performed, temples lighted, and feasts given on the occasion.

Also, when the followers of the Lâmâ of Tibet perform dance, song and music, putting on masks of animals, one is naturally led to think that the Gambhîrâ at one time extended its sway in all directions, north and south, east and west.

This will be further borne out by the fact that a time was when festivities similar to those of the Gambhîrâ were extensively held far beyond the limits of India—in the islands of the Indian Ocean. Even so far back as the time of the *Shunya Purâṇa* we find Râmâi Pandit to have sung "Lord Dharma was highly revered in Ceylon". The Vana Pâtha and the Paritta festivities of this island seem to be closely allied to the Gambhîrâ. So also if we carefully study the similar festivities of far-off countries we are reasonably led to infer that analogues and duplicates of the Gambhîrâ crossed the limits of Asia and became established in Europe and Africa.

Thus, great festivities were held in old Greece in honour of the God Bacchus.[1] The votaries of these

[1] Reference is made to this in Milton's *Comus* :—

"Meanwhile welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity".

Although the poet has found in this an index of the degenerated

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festivities besmeared their bodies with ink and putting on lambskin danced fantastically to suitable songs and music. Similar festivities were also held in honour of the Son of Bacchus. On these occasions emblematical images were stationed along the roads. These festivities were closely similar to those of the Gambhîrâ. In Babylon also they were observed with great pomp and grandeur.

God Osiris of Egypt resembles our Shiva in nature and likes and dislikes, although in form he is like the image of Mahâkâla. His wife seems to be no other than our Shakti. They ride Apis as our Shiva rides the bull. Osiris is also decorated with snakes and clad in skin. In that country also festivities were held in his honour and these have been described in Mohammedan books as similar to the Id festivities. Similar ceremonies were also observed in honour of many other greater and lesser gods.

Section III.—History of the Institution.

It would be interesting to note some of the precursors of the present-day socio-religious festival in Bengal. We give here three pictures of this institution or its analogue in three different ages.

mind, yet such dances and songs were very popular in those days of the distant past, and putting on masks people appeared on the stage to perform these. Their wild and "fantastic" dance of midnight became a very serious affair. The nature of this dance is well expressed in the following lines:—

"Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round".

This knitting of hands, this beating the ground, this light fantastic round remind one clearly of some of the wild dances of the Gambhîrâ.

The underlying religious idea is found in the following couplet:—

"Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin".—*Comus.*

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(*a*) *The Institution in the Mahâbhârata.*

In the *Mahâbhârata* we find very realistic scenes about the family of the god Shiva, and we recognize him as the same jolly lover of feasts and festivities.

Shiva has been painted there absorbed in worldly affairs. We find him, in the time of Yudhiṣthira (the eldest of the five Pândavas, of whose exploits we read so much in the *Mahâbhârata*), a man of the family and attended by a host of ghosts and goblins. In his efforts to obtain the Pâshupata (lit. belonging to Pashupati, i.e. Shiva) weapon, Arjuna (the third Pândava) had to fight with Shiva disguised as a mountaineer. Shiva was no longer a simple Fire-god that he had been in the *Vedas*, but here we find him as a man. In the Himâlayas was his home; Pârvatî was his wife, and he was the head of a family consisting of his wife. sons and daughters.

In ancient Vedic rites Shiva and his energy had places assigned to them on the sacrificial ground. It is in the epics, however, that form was attributed to him. In the *Râmâyana* Shiva is found to have served as porter at the gate of the palace of Râvaṇa; and in the course of the Kurukṣetra war also we find him engaged in guarding the entrance to some tents. These facts lead us to suppose that it was about this time that his image first began to be constructed; and it was probably at the next age, if not at this, that sacrifices were first performed with the image of Shiva.

The character of sacrifices was gradually becoming more and more complex. It was out of the question for Yudhiṣthira to think of performing his Ashwamedha (i.e. in which is offered the flesh of the horse) sacrifice with soma-rasa[1] (juice of the soma plant) only or with the lives of two or three beasts. His sacrificial ground

[1] Soma: a celebrated Vedic plant not yet identified.

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rang with the sounds of small drums called mridangas and conchshells, looked brisk and alive with young ladies, and presented a scene of revelry. King Yudhiṣthira feasted millions of Brâhmaṇas with pork, venison and various other kinds of food according to their tastes. The guests of both the sexes were regaled with wine, meat and various other kinds of food; a vast crowd attended the place of sacrifice; and from there floated up rich strains of melodious song and music.

The Shiva of these times is not the Shivâgni of the Vedic age. He is the object of worship of a particular religious sect. He is the presiding god of the heaven, named Shivaloka (i.e. region of Shiva) after him. The Shaiva sect (also named after him) follows the line of worship that was laid down by him.

Like other gods he has not to be propitiated through the observance of severe austerities. He is, as his name Âshutoṣa implies, easily propitiated, and his patronage is easily secured.

The author of the *Bhâgavata*, through the lips of Dakṣa, has described the votaries of Shiva thus :—

"Let those the purity of whose lives is lost and whose reasoning is clouded, embrace the Shaiva cult and keep on matted hair, besmear their bodies with ashes and put on garlands of bones. To those who are thus initiated the four kinds of wine, viz. Gaudî, Paustî, Mâdhvî as well as Âsava (i.e. made of the juice of the palm-tree), are as welcome as the gods themselves."

The sannyâsis, who on their initiation into the Shaiva cult regaled themselves with wine and kept matted hair on their heads and daubed their bodies with ashes, were always in a state of drunkenness and thus worshipped Shiva. The pramathas (attendants on Shiva) were supposed to dance to the music struck up by small drums called damaru and other

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instruments. All the people worshipped, and held festivities in honour of, this great god with dance, song and music, etc.

(*b*) *The Institution in the Vedas.*

The pre-eminently modern character of Shaiva-cum-Shâkta cult that we find in the Epics has, however, been the growth of ages. The preceding Vedic literature furnishes important stages in the evolution of Shaivaism. We can vividly realize the processes by which the complex institution of the present day with its paraphernalia of image, temples, votaries, tortures, songs, revelries, etc., seems to have evolved out of the simple primitive sacrificial festive rites.

From time immemorial people are found to have gathered to offer up prayers to gods and to hold religious festivities with music, song and dance. We get sufficient glimpses into those festivities, and the ancient literature bears a clear testimony to the fact that festivities like the Gâjan are not altogether new.

At harvest time festivities were held in honour of the gods with feasts, dance and music. People worshipped the Sun-god and the Fire-god, and offered to them the produce of their fields, a thrilling draught of the juice of the soma plant known as soma-rasa and the flesh of beasts. At the conclusion of these sacrifices, the villagers assembled and partook of the offerings.

People of the Vedic age offered worship and hymns to Varuṇa, Indra, Mitra (the Sun-god), the twin sons of Suryya (who were physicians to the gods) and the Ribhus (a host of spirits raised by Bhrigu from the fire kindled at the sacrifice of Dakṣa). They offered to these deities the delicious beverage known as soma-

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rasa, and then they regaled themselves with this offered drink; men and women joined together in dancing and singing songs selected from the *Sâma veda*, etc., in honour of these gods and thus passed the day in great merriment.

Then as the society became more advanced in culture and grew more populous, these Vedic festivities also came to acquire greater pomp and grandeur. Each festivity was attended by a much larger concourse of people, and dance, song, music and other amusements were provided on a larger scale and the soma-rasa was consumed in a much larger quantity.

The old festivities became more and more complex, and the insatiable imagination went on inventing newer ones to keep up the craze for amusements.

The God of Fire came to be imagined in many different forms, and complex sacrificial festivities were instituted on large scales. In these, however, Agni (the Fire-god) was not the only recipient of worship; Angirâ and Sutrâtmâ as Virâta (one of the first offsprings of Brahmâ) also came in for their shares. Their sons also, as descendants of Agni, were allowed a share in the sacrificial offerings besides having altars set apart for their seats. Thus with his sons, daughters and their progeny, the line of Agni became a very long one, and Achismatî, Havismatî and Mahâmatî received worship as different forms of Agni.

Nay, human imagination went a step farther and created wives for the Fire-gods. With them on their left sides they sat to receive worship. With Târâ, wife of the Fire-god named Vrihaspati, the great sacrifices of Darsha and Paurṇamâsa began to be celebrated with great pomp.

With the feeling of necessity for meat was introduced the horse-sacrifice. We come across the Shanyu

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Agni first in connexion with the Châturmâsya (extending over four months) horse sacrifice. His second son Bharatâgni was offered pitcherfuls of clarified butter; and one of his descendants, viz. Siddhi-Agni, came to be the presiding deity of the Agni-daivata sacrifice.

Viṣṇu, Pânchajanya and Agni were worshipped in the Darsha (the new moon) and Paurṇamâsa (the full moon) sacrifices. Shivâgni who was devoted to the worship of Shakti (divine energy personified), was also worshipped at these sacrifices and before him beasts were sacrificed. Hence this fire came to be regarded as a form of the destructive energy.

The first followers of the Vedas, thinking the setting sun to be tired, offered worship to him under the name of Prashântâgni (i.e. Pacified Fire). Kratu (Sacrifice Personified) received worship as Niyatâgni (i.e. Permanent Fire). Fires named Shiva, Viṣṇu, Kratu, etc., and Agni (Fire-god) himself were regarded as luminous fires. Sacrifices were performed with wine, meat and other articles of food and drink and also with music, song and dance.

It may be safely inferred that although in those days image-worship was not probably in vogue, yet it was the idea of these various Fire-gods with their wives, as imagined for sacrificial purposes, that was the real origin of the image-worship introduced at a later age. The germ of image-worship lay hidden in the imagination which influenced human nature to think of the necessity of a wife for the Fire-god.

(*c*) *The Institution as Described by Hiuen Thsang.*

From what may be called the formative stages of the institution we come to the broad daylight of history. And we find that in the days of Harṣavardhana, in the seventh century of the Christian era, which enjoyed as

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a heritage the rich bequest of Vikramâdityan culture, something like the present-day processions, street-songs, and social gatherings were religiously attended by both the Emperor and the dependent Princes themselves, to the entire satisfaction of the Hindu and Buddhist subjects. In the Imperial socio-religious ceremony that was witnessed by Hiuen Thsang, the Chinese Master of Law, we can see the counterpart of the existing institution of the people with the modifications due to that epoch of toleration and religious *rapprochement*.

Bright traces of the festivities that were noticed by the Chinese travellers, Fa Hien and Hiuen Thsang, have been left in their literature. The Chariot festivities held in honour of Buddha, the installation of the Buddhist Trinity in the temple, the dance, song and music that attended all these festivities, the flocking of the country-folk from far and near to towns on these occasions and their passing sleepless nights in revelries —all these seem to be but an outcome of the Vedic and Epic festivities or rather a repetition of them in newer forms.

From the report of Hiuen Thsang it is evident that during his stay in this country the Emperor of Northern India celebrated a great Buddhist festival at his capital Kanauj, in connexion with which wonderful festivities were held and grand entertainments provided. Emperor Harṣa himself played the part of Indra, and his friend, Bhâskara Varmâ (Kumâradeva), lord of Assam, appeared disguised as Brahmâ. This taking part in the Buddhist festivities by Kings in the guise of non-Buddhist gods seems to indicate that old Buddhism had been losing its hold and was becoming identified with neo-Hinduism.

Another festival was held at Allahabad. Worship

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was offered on the first day of these festivities to the image of Buddha, on the second day to that of the Sun-god, and on the third to that of Shiva ; and in connexion with these the above ceremonies were observed and entertainments given. It is not unlikely that in the neighbouring territories also similar festivities were held.

In course of time these festivities became prevalent throughout the country and it became a custom to entertain the images of Buddha, the Sun-god and Shiva by putting on the guises of Hindu gods and goddesses.

And eventually the Buddhists replaced the Hindu Shiva and Pârvatî by Bodhisattva Manjushri and his personified energy or wife Ârya Târâ respectively. There is good reason to suppose that the Buddhists resorted to this method of modifying their religion to suit the tastes of the people, only with a view to replacing Hinduism altogether. In many places stone images of their Bodhisattva were constructed and installed.

Section IV.—The Institution as an Instrument of National Culture.

The Gambhîrâ institution is a potent factor of mass-education. The educative influence of such agencies as popular festivals is very well illustrated by their effects upon the literature, arts, industries, morals and public spirit of the people who take part in this socio-religious ceremony in connexion with the worship of Shiva.

(*a*) *Influence on Bengali Literature.*

Improved tone and healthy development always come to a language through the channel of religion. Literature has largely flourished and gained in strength, beauty and sweetness as the handmaid of religion in our

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country as elsewhere. The literature of India reached a high development under the influence of Buddhism in the land. The Purâṇas and the literary works based on them owed their tone and style to religious culture. The growth and expansion of Bengali literature went hand in hand with the propagation of the Vaiṣṇava faith by Chaitanya. The musical powers of the country-poets have also displayed themselves through the Shaiva cult as fostered by the Gambhîrâ festivities. The songs of the Gambhîrâ have flowed from the hearts of the village poets and have carried currents of devotion, love and poetry to the hearts of the mass. And as results of this there have been a continuous stream of national poetry and births of *minnesingers*, *volksdichters* and *littérateurs*. Many Râmaprasâdas and many Chandidâsas (the former was a saintly poet of the eighteenth century and the latter a poet of considerable parts in the fourteenth) have thus owed their origin to the Gambhîrâ. The sweet and melodious poems of these born poets have diffused, far and wide, like sweet flowers, the rich fragrance of their music. The growth and development of rural literature and folk-poesy in Bengal are solely due to the energy that institutions like the Gambhîrâ have ever called into existence.

The artful diction, the rich style and the high sentiments of Bhâratachandra, Chandidâsa and Jayadeva are even now met with in the songs composed for the Gambhîrâ. Even in the *Lays of Viṣahari* (songs relating to the Goddess of Snakes) there are many proofs of the authors' thoughtfulness and deep religious fervour. In his song beginning with "Thou knowest quite well the art of weaving, O Lord!" poet Harimohana of Sâhâpur (village in Malda) has displayed the same lofty character of a Sâdhaka, the same spirit of devotion and the same thoughtfulness as the renowned Râmaprasâda.

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The Gambhîrâ festivities thus do not only provide three days' amusements for the people of a few villages of a certain district of Bengal, but have a far-reaching consequence. They promote largely the national spirit of the Bengalee people. To enrich the Bengali language and literature, to improve the tone of thought of the Bengalees, to raise higher their standard of culture, to create a lofty national ideal for them—we have the Gambhîrâ of Malda as an effective means.

The distinguished poet Baradâcharaṇa Mitra was present at the sitting of the North Bengal Literary Conference at Malda. The following are his remarks about the songs of the Gambhîrâ held on the occasion :—

"From the representation of to-day I have come to learn that herein lie hidden the germs of progress for the drama of educated Bengal. It is beautiful in all its parts and we have much to know and learn from it. In the Gambhîrâ representation we have nothing of the artificialities of the yâtrâ or the theatre, here we have sincere and natural outbursts of the unsophisticated life of the villager. I have heard these songs to-day with an inexpressible pleasure. In these natural words of the heart, denuded of all linguistic flourish, is to be found a perennial source of deep happiness.

"Many of our prominent poets and authors are present here to-day and have themselves experienced the effect of naturalness in literature. I believe that if they will hereafter strive to introduce in their works this element of artless sincerity, their productions will acquire a real force in our life.

"We should, all of us, do our best to see that ancient festivities of Bengal like those of the Gambhîrâ do not die out."

The following remarks about Gambhîrâ literature

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are reproduced from *The Collegian* of Calcutta (No. 1, September, 1913):—

"A very interesting paper was read by Kumud nâth Lâhiri at the last North Bengal Literary Conference held at Dinajpur and has been published in two issues of the *Grihastha*, a Bengali monthly of the first rank. The writer has introduced to the literary public several men of letters, poets, musicians, dancers, etc., whose performances give delight to thousands of inhabitants of the district of Malda. Their number is legion, and some of them display exceptionally high powers of versification and imagination. Most of them half-educated and unlettered, their productions are the spontaneous outcome of unsophisticated souls rich in sentiment and culture. The *Grihastha* doubts very much if among the so-called educated classes there are men so really influential and 'immortal' as these who may be compared to the bards, minstrels and châranas of mediæval India. Their songs cover almost every department of human thought and activity, love, domestic morality, social satire, economic reforms, religion, etc., and live from mouth to mouth for generations. . . . They are the poets of the poor and the lowly, and have a position in our society something like that of Langland, Gray, Collins and Burns among English-speaking people. Many are the institutions in Bengal which diversify the people's life in this way; and men of letters like these who grow up in their connexion are the real mass-educators and social reformers of the country."

(*b*) *The Gambhîrâ and the Folk-Arts.*

The Gambhîrâ is not an institution simply for providing two or three days' amusement. With the cultivation of literature, it also kindles the love of the fine arts. A

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spirit of excelling in decoration naturally takes possession of the hearts of the leaders of the several Gambhîrâ parties; and as a result of this there springs up a keen competition, and no pains are spared to make the decoration of each pandal as nice as possible.

The spirit of competition expresses itself in two ways. First, with reference to the construction of the images of gods and goddesses. These have to be made in accordance with the descriptions found in legends or in *Shilpa Shâstras* (treatises on arts and crafts), but at the same time there have to be introduced the elements of novelty and diversity. The image of Shiva is made in accordance with Purâṇic descriptions, but the painters draw on their canvases various artful pictures and these are used to add to the decoration of the Gambhîrâ house. As there is scope for novelty and variety, the painters are actuated by a feeling of emulation and strive to make these pictures as exquisite as they can. Owing to the spirit of competition growing keener and keener, the pictures of recent times have shown much improvement upon their predecessors, and the painters have learnt to produce from imagination more and more beautiful pieces.

Secondly, with reference to the various items of decoration. Imitation fruits and flowers made of clay, Indian cork and wax have been largely used in the decoration of the Gambhîrâ pandals, and thus have helped to create a taste for improved fine arts. In mediæval times Malda was specially noted for such works of art.

The cornices, etc., of the Gambhîrâ pandal are nicely made with paper. Beautiful fringes are made also with the same material, variously perforated with small files. These are very pretty to look at. There are many people who can make really exquisite things out of

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paper. This is an old art. The artists exhibited their skill by making flags and banners, lotuses and other flowers with paper, and the competition that was called into existence in this field helped not a little in making the art attain a gradually higher standard.

The âlipana is a characteristic product of the Indian art of painting. It consists in variously painting the floors and walls of a house or its courtyard with the paste of rice-powder on festive occasions. It was probably first invented by the fair sex. This has also been an item in the decoration of Gambhîrâ temples. Even here competition was rife, and the female painters of the several Gambhîrâ parties tried to show their utmost skill. In this way even such a thing as the simple âlipana has considerably improved.

The Gambhîrâ has supplied a stimulus also to the art of weaving. On such festive occasions various kinds of fine cloth have been largely in demand, and the local weavers competed with one another not only in supplying them but also in improving the art.

Hence it will be seen that the Gambhîrâ does not merely provide amusement for the people with dance, song and music, but it largely helps in awakening in the minds of men those springs of action that are the main causes of the improvement of literature and the fine arts.

(*c*) *The Institution as a School of Moral Training.*

While, on the one hand, the Gambhîṛâ festival educates the tastes and artistic sense of the people by influencing the folk-poesy and handicrafts, it is, on the other, a powerful school of moral education and political training.

The Gambhîrâ has been a reformer of social defects and evils. People learn from it an earnestness and a

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capacity to work in a body for their common good. The truth that although independent in their individual affairs, the members of a society are but parts of the same unit, is well taught through their joint work for the Gambhîrâ.

Besides, the singers of the Gambhîrâ publish, as it were, in and through their songs, an annual report of the social life, and thus largely help in improving its tone. The hidden offences and secret vices of individuals are exposed by them, and thus very valuable services are rendered to morals.

There is a tradition with the Gambhîrâ *minnesingers* that sinners should confess[1] their own sins to be absolved from them. Very few persons are, however, found now-a-days to conform to this rule. But the Gambhîrâ is not prepared to let them off so easily. When one person commits an offence and tries to conceal it some other person makes a dramatic representation of the whole case in the Gambhîrâ before a large audience. This serves as a double-barrelled gun. It makes not only the offender ashamed of himself but has a deterrent effect also upon the audience. They dare not repeat it overtly or covertly for fear of this terrible exposure. Judged from the social standpoint, the Gambhîrâ will thus appear to be at once the guide, protector and reformer of society.

(*d*) *The Institution as a School of Public Life.*

Politics also has a place in the Gambhîrâ. The principle that works here is a very simple and ancient one. The Gambhîrâ festivities equip the people with the strength of unity and create in them a sincere desire to combine in the realization of a common cause. Further, to regulate this strength and energy, heroes

[1] *Vide* pp. 135-6.

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grow up from among themselves, each of whom voluntarily takes upon himself the responsibility of a department. Under each leader, again, there are several lieutenants, who avail themselves of his guidance and thus learn how to work in a methodical way. The Gambhîrâ will thus be found to be a healthy organization. And it is this which has brought into force the system of administration by the Mandala or Headman, and it may also be taken to have helped in the growth of the Panchayet system (lit. government by five, i.e. management of village affairs by a body of competent men).

The Mândalika system works exactly as a political organization. When discussing a subject affecting all his people or when he sits in judgment upon social offences of small magnitude, the Mandala does not sit alone but has the "Vârika" or "Parâmâṇika" to help him as his minister. All his people are invited to attend at the time of the trial. There are special messengers for summoning the people on this occasion. All these officers are honorary public servants. This practice has been in vogue from very early times. It is with the help of the Mandala that village administration is carried on. It will thus be seen that the assembly presided over by the Mandala is really but a miniature form of the Royal Court. On entering the assembly the members have to lower their heads in honour of "the five". This "five" represents the whole body of members or rather their united strength. Then meditating on "the five Nârâyaṇas" and imagining themselves to have assembled before the energy of Nârâyaṇa (God Viṣṇu), the members commence the work of the assembly. No sympathy is seen to be felt with the offender, nor does any member venture to show, even if he feels at heart, any sympathy with him. The

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punishment inflicted is of two kinds : a fine may be imposed upon the offender, or he may be ordered to proceed to holy places to expiate his offence. The fine, when realized, is deposited with the Mandala to be spent thereafter on some common good and not for the benefit of any one individual. Again, the budget of the Gambhîrâ is passed and all other affairs relating to it are settled with common consent. It is evident from this that sound political principles are at work in the Gambhîrâ organization. Further, it need be noted that the reverential attitude towards the Council of the Five as if it were an assembly of five gods indicates the democratic spirit as expressed in the formula, *vox populi vox dcii.* Students of world's mediæval political institutions are well aware through the researches of Maine, Elphinstone, Baden-Powell and others that the Indian Village Communities[1] (the analogues of Russian *Mirs*) were indigenous republican organizations of self-government, self-legislation, and local self-taxation for local purposes.

[1] *Vide* Dutt's *Economic History of India.* See also the account of Chola Administration (tenth-eleventh century) in Aiyangar's *Ancient India.*

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CHAPTER II.

THE BENGALI FOLK-POESY OF SHAIVAISM.

SECTION I.—IMPORTANCE OF VERNACULARS.

"WITH the analysis of the universe taught by the Sânkhya and the disciplines of the Yoga," says Principal P. T. Shrinivas Iyengar in the introduction to his translation of the *Shiva-Sutra-Vimarsini* of Kṣemarâja in the "Indian Thought Series,"[1] "were welded in the Vaiṣṇava and Shaiva schools, also the love of a personal God and the belief that God's grace is a necessary antecedent of individual salvation. This provision for devotion to a distinct personal God enabled these cults to oust their rivals, the Bauddha and the Jaina, and to continue to our days to be the living religions of India, in spite of the supposed superiority of the Vedanta." The metaphysics of Shaivaism.

The above extract puts in a nutshell the whole history and philosophy of Indian Shaiva-cum-Shâktaism. One or other of the forms of this cult have commanded for centuries, and do still command, the devotion of thousands of men and women in all parts of India among the Kashmiris, Punjabis, Rajputs, Marathas, Southerners, Andhras and Bengalees. In spite of the rigidity and inflexibility of customs and social life brought about by codification of laws in recent times, and notwithstanding the narrow provincial spirit of the

[1] Edited by Dr. Gangânâth Jhâ and Dr. Thibaut. *Vide* Sir Bhandarkar's *Vaisnavism, Shaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, and also Chatterji's *Kashmir Shaivaism*.

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An all-India fact.

modern educated Indians, due to the growth of habits and sentiments in watertight administrative compartments, the soul of India is really one. It would be interesting to study how in the absence of railways and telegraphs and printing presses in ancient and mediæval times "one touch of Nature made," as it were, the whole Indian "world kin". It is at this age difficult to conceive the manifold processes of social intermixture and cultural *rapprochements* that made possible the filtration of ideas both horizontally and vertically. The kaleidoscopic political changes which shifted the vital centres of gravity from people to people, province to province, and district to district, and necessarily converted the borderlands or buffer-States of one epoch into prominent seats of political and cultural life of the next, and occasionally diverted the stream of civilization from a sometime stronghold of paramount ideas along new and untrodden channels, are hardly visible to us to-day because of the paucity of historical details bearing on them.

On the other hand, the translation of higher culture into the tongues of the people of the various parts from the common storehouse of Sanskrit, the *lingua franca* of educated India through the ages, and the necessary modifications or adaptations have imparted a local colouring and distinctive tone to the all-India Hindu traditions, sentiments and customs in the several parts of the country. Social and religious life of the people of India has thus been for ages governed not simply by the texts of the Shâstras in Sanskrit (which, by the by, also could not escape the natural adaptation to the conditions of time and place), but also really and to a powerful extent by the vast mass of vernacular literature, both secular and religious, that grew up side by side with and eventually replaced the original storehouse. Tulsidâsa, Krittivâsa and Tukârâma are a few of the numerous

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provincial poets and singers who have governed the thoughts and activities of the people. In fact, the diversity that characterizes the customs and festivals, hymns and rituals of the people in different parts of India in the self-same socio-religious institution is so great today that it is difficult to perceive the unity underlying them. Its local diversities.

The present-day Shaivaism or Shaiva-cum-Shâktaism presents such a diversity of rites and ceremonies. In this chapter it is proposed to give an account of a modern socio-religious festival that has grown up in connexion with the worship of Shiva in certain districts of Bengal. The districts, again, present the same variety and diversity not only in name but also in the actual incidents of worship.[1]

A study of the Gambhîrâ festival, both in its present and past forms would reveal how Shaivaism has assimilated and ultimately swallowed up both Buddhism and Jainism in Bengal. It will also bring into prominence the place that vernacular literature ought to occupy in Indian historical research as representing the processes of this conquest and defeat. To all students of comparative mythology and sociology the study of Indian vernaculars will thus be found to be a desideratum. For a proper interpretation of the forces that have contributed to the building up of Indian civiliza-

[1] A voluminous literature that directly or indirectly pertains to the subject has been collected in the form of old Bengali manuscripts through the efforts of literary associations like the Bangiya Sâhitya Pariṣat of Calcutta and the numerous institutions in the districts affiliated to it, and educational institutions like the District Council of National Education, Malda, as well as the private efforts of research scholars like Mr. Nagendranâth Vasu, editor of *Vishwakoṣa* in Bengali, Mr. Dineschandra Sen, author of the *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, and Mr. Haridâs Pâlit, author of *Âdyer Gambhirâ*.

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tion the future historian would have to depend more and more on Tamil,[1] Bengali, Marathi and Hindi.

Section II.—Salutation-Songs in Bengali Manuscripts.

Before proceeding to describe the various parts of the Gambhîrâ festivities we give some of the Bengali folk-hymns that are recited by the devotees before their god Shiva on the festival days. The *Vandanâs* or Salutation-songs are in manuscript. These are the compositions of village poets and poetasters, and give an account of the various methods adopted by the Bhaktas or votaries to purify in mind and thought both themselves as well as the temple, pandal, cottages, the four quarters, and all the paraphernalia of the festival. The cosmogony adopted in these rustic songs indicates the peculiar channel through which the popular mind has grown in these parts of Eastern India, and would be interesting to scholars who have devoted themselves to the study of Indian sociology. To a certain extent, the literature of the Gambhîrâ-cycles may be aptly compared with the mysteries and miracle-plays in Old English[2] and the *No*-plays of Japan.

On the days of the Chhota Tâmâsâ[3] and the Bada Tâmâsâ[4] the Bhaktas gather together at dusk in the Gambhîrâ house. The Mandala of the Gambhîrâ or the chief votary stands up, cane in hand, like the village schoolmaster, and makes the other votaries stand in a row before him. Then they begin simultaneously to

[1] Mr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar has in his scholarly historical work, *Ancient India*, demonstrated the value of Tamil in the construction of South Indian history.

[2] *Vide The Mediæval Stage*, by Chambers.

[3] Lesser festivities. [4] Greater festivities.

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sing aloud the hymn in front of the image of Shiva, under the tutoring of the chief votary, who sings first. During the offering of the hymns till the commencement of Ârati (the presentation of lights, the smoke of burnt incenses and of the sounding bell to a god, jointly called wave-offering), the votaries have to stand on one leg only, and with the completion of each part of several hymns they have to advance two paces on one foot only and then to return in the same way to their former places. Comparing the Gambhîrâ hymns of different villages, one will, no doubt, find some differences among them, but the underlying idea will appear to be the same in all.

Section III.—Specimen 1.

The first specimen of Salutation-song is given below.[1]

The invocation.

1. Whence do you come, O Lord, and where is your home? (you are a mysterious being), you come every day but never (we observe with wonder) do you take any food or drink. When there is no land or water but only an immense void, you do rest on (such a volatile thing as) camphor and live upon air only.

Oh, what a God of Gods is our Shivanâtha, Lord Shiva!

Dharma as Void. The history of the creation of the world. The tortoise as its last support.

2. There was neither land nor water nor the region of gods; (only) Dharma managed somehow to abide as Void. The crab was sent by him under the earth and it fetched a lump of earth as big as a dot. To this was added another, as big as a sesamum seed, and to this yet another as big as a marmelos fruit (Vela); and thus was the world created (and placed) on the back of the tortoise. Thus do I narrate before this assembly the history of the world's creation, as told by my Lord

[1] It is in the possession of Babu Gadâdhara Dâs of Dhântalâ, Malda.

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(spiritual) preceptor through the favour of Saraswatî (the Goddess of Knowledge).

Oh, what a God of Gods is our Shivanâtha!

Purification of the mouth and the whole body.

3. There is the Lâlgiri hill with Darsana as its door; but I was not born on that. (The line is obscure, unless it means that I was not born in the usual way.) (Hence) my hands are pure, my feet are pure and pure are the words of my five mouths (Shiva or Mahâdeva being represented as having five mouths), although I have not worshipped Bhavânî the first deity (representing entire divine energy). I know my body is pure, standing before the door of Shiva, who is older than the *Âgama* (the esoteric scripture of the Hindus) and the *Vedas*.

Oh, what a God of Gods is our Shivanâtha!

Purification of the temple.

4. The Ulluka (gibbon) says, it is the Guru (spiritual preceptor) who is the cause of this. Under his orders the four corners of the temple have become purified. Here sits the Guru, the Lord of Gods in the temple with his mind (concentrated). His words have purified my votaries.

Oh, what a God of Gods is our Shivanâtha!

Creation of beings.

5. Under orders of Kâmâkhyâ (another name of Chandî), Kâla (the name of a blacksmith) shaped a billhook. Brahmâ (the creator) sits in the front, Viṣṇu (the protector) in the rear, and Shiva (the destroyer) in the middle. Remembering the name of Shiva, beings have fallen into the mouth this day (i.e. have come into existence).[1]

Oh, what a God of Gods is our Bholânâtha (another name of Shiva) or Shivanâtha!

The descent of Kapilâ. Her birth story.

6. Kapilâ (the cow mentioned in the Purâṇas as possessing divine powers) of heaven came down to the

[1] It probably refers to the story that Brahmâ created the Brâhmaṇa from his mouth.

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earth ; and Vishweshwara (lit. the lord of the universe, a name of Shiva) mounted his bull (and also came down). She supports the world of men, and her udder, which gives milk, curds, ghee and buttermilk, purifies the earth. I do tell the story of the birth of Kapilâ before this gathering, as I heard it from the lips of my Lord, the (spiritual) preceptor through the grace of Saraswatî.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Churning of the ocean by the gods and distribution of the prizes.

7. Alas! Mahâdeva (Shiva), what are you doing (thus), sitting (so idly)! The other gods came down in a body and they have churned the ocean. (Of the prizes thus obtained) Indra (the King of gods) has taken the Uchchaisravâ horse, and Nârâyaṇa (another name of Viṣṇu) has possessed himself of Lakṣmî (the Goddess of Fortune) ; and the other gods have distributed the rest among themselves. Being last (to claim your share) you are only to be deceived. (At this) Mahâdeva cried out in anger, "What am I to do now?"

Oh, what a God, etc.

Salutation to the Gambhîrâ.

8. Make your salutation to land, water and to the Gambhîrâ of Vudâ (oldest, meaning the First Person) Shiva, and also to the songs (hymns in praise) of Saraswatî, the Goddess of Knowledge. We bow low at the feet of Shiva who rides an ox.

Invocation of the gods.

Oh, what a God of Gods is our Dâtânâtha (Lord of the givers of boons ; another name of Shiva) or Shivanatha.

9. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of Gaṇesha (the bestower of success) who has come riding a mouse.

Oh, what a, etc.

10. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of Kârtika (the God of War) who rides a peacock.

Oh, what a, etc.

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11. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of Lakṣmî who has come riding an owl.

Oh, what a, etc.

12. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of Gamgâ (the presiding deity of the Ganges —wife of Shiva) who has come riding a makara (a fabulous marine creature something like the seal).

Oh, what a, etc.

13. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of Durgâ (a name of Chandî, represented as having ten hands) who has come riding a lion.

Oh, what a, etc.

14. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of Yama (Lord of Death) who has come riding a buffalo.

15. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of Brahmâ, the creator who has come riding a swan.

Oh, what a, etc.

16. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of the thirty crores (three hundred millions) of gods who have come on the backs of gibbons.

Oh, what a, etc.

17. (Make your salutation, etc.) Let us bow low at the feet of those (gods), whose names we do not know.

Oh, what a, etc.

The opening of the gates.

18. The horse is white and the pâlâna (caparison) is made of the rich cloth known as net. Blessed be (the name of) Jagannâtha (Lord of the Universe, also a name of the creator), the watchman (Kotâla). As ordered by him, let me out through the southern gate.

The southern gate.

Over the southern gate presides the blessed Jagannâtha. In his puri (there is here a pun. The word Puri means a town ; there is also a town of this name in Orissa, where the image of Jagannâtha is worshipped) people

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purchase cooked rice for their food, and in the absence of water in the Kamandalu (a water-pot, more generally used by ascetics), they rub their (unclean) hands[1] over their heads (meaning that through the influence of the god there is observed here no caste distinction nor any differentiation between physical purity and impurity, everything being pure in the holy atmosphere of this sacred place).

Oh, what a, etc.

19. The horse is white and the caparison is made of the rich cloth known as net. Blessed be (the name of) Jagannâtha, the watchman. As ordered by him, now let me out through the western gate. The western gate.

Over the western gate presides the eleventh Bhîma (a name of Mahâdeva or Shiva, meaning the awful). I bow down at his feet.

Oh, what a, etc.

20. The horse is white, etc. At the northern gate keeps watch Bhânu Bhâskara Râya (meaning probably the glorious Sun-god. Bhânu and Bhâskara, both refer to the Sun. Râya means, of the royal line, honourable. Hence it may be taken to mean glorious). The northern gate.

Oh, what a, etc.

21. The horse is white, etc. At Kâmarupa (a town in Assam), which is the eastern gate, keeps watch, under orders of Chandî, (represented here as) the daughter of a Hândî (belonging to the lowest class of Hindus), the (goddess) Kâmâkhyâ (the same goddess in another form and under a different name). I bow low at her feet. The eastern gate.

Oh, what a, etc.

Section IV.—Specimen 2.

A comparatively large account is to be found in an old manuscript which is in the possession of Babu

[1] The rule generally is to wash the hands clean with water after meals.

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Kisorimohan Dâs of Râdhânagar in Malda. We quote the hymns below :—

Creation.

1. We are anxious to know, O Lord, how you managed to abide in the form of the Void at the time of the universal deluge.

He (the Lord) ordered the crab, of golden hue and born in the line of charioteers (Sutayoni), to fetch earth.

The crab fetched a lump of earth in the shape of an egg. (And) the egg burst into two.

(This is) how the world was created by the Lord (Bhagavân).

Oh, what a, etc.

Creation of Earth.

2. Earth, Earth, Earth.—By whom was it created? —Brahmâ, Viṣṇu and Maheshwara, the three together produced it.

Kâla, the expert blacksmith, shaped out the bill-hook. (They) ascertaining well its (probably meaning the egg) head, middle and end, applied the bill-hook to it.

Creation of beings.

(Of the three parts thus made) Brahmâ takes his seat on the head, Viṣṇu on the end, and Shiva on the middle. Let the creatures take their seats on the place where dwells the twelfth Shiva.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Earth, Earth, Earth.—By whom was it created? —Brahmâ, Viṣṇu and Maheshwara, the three together produced it.

(Hearing this) the potter Kâla cried out: "Yes, O Gosâin (Lord), now have I remembered (all this)".

The story of the birth of Ghata and Dhuvchi.

3. This Kâla potter had one or two brothers. They prepared clay and deposited it in several places.

After the clay was prepared they put it on the wheel, and then, by two and a half turns of the wheel, they turned out the Danker pâtila (an earthen vessel with a mirror in it, placed in front of the image) and Ghata (pitcher) and Dhuvchi (vessel for burning incense in).

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These were dried by the Sun-god and burnt by Brahmâ (here the Fire-god), and the thirty crores of gods uttered their benedictions on them.

Thus have I told in this assembly the birth story of Ghata and Dhuvchi.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Salutation to Dhaval (white) Dharma Niranjana.

4. On a white bedstead is a white seat and on that white seat a white throne. Dharma Niranjana (lit. meaning spotless, pure, white) has seated himself on the white bedstead.

The Lord is white both when he assumes a form and when he becomes formless ; and, hear me, through the grace of his white feet he has saved the world.

Oh, what a God, etc.

The waking up of Sadâshiva from his sleep.

5. Rise, get up, O Sadâshiva (the same as Shiva), shake off your sleep ; for, behold, the devotees (followers) of Âula [1] have come here to pay their homage to you.

[1] On inquiry as to who these devotees of Âula were, and why they came to the Gambhîrâ to tender their homage to the Gambhîrâ Deity, it has been found that they formed rather a new sect following the creed of Âula Chând. A brief account of the life and teachings of this Âula Chând will not be deemed out of place here.

"There was in the village of Ula a certain Bârui (one who grows and sells betels) under the name of Mahâdeva.

"On the first Friday of the month of Phâlgoon (February-March) in 1616 A.D., he found in his betel-field an eight-year-old boy of unknown parentage. He took him home, brought him up with affection and gave him the name of Purna chandra. It was this foundling who was afterwards known as Âula Chând. For twenty-seven long years he travelled from place to place and through the influence of his teaching succeeded in winning over Râmasarana Pâla to his faith. He founded a new creed and had twenty-two followers, among whom Lakṣmikânta, Kriṣṇa Dâsa and Viṣṇu Dâsa are the best known. In 1691 A.D., Âula Chând breathed his last.

"He assumed the Koupina (a piece of cloth worn over the loins) and went out with a kânthâ (rags sewed up together in the form of a thin quilt) on his person. He used to impart instruction in Bengali

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Open your doors of sandal-wood so that they may give you milk and water of the Ganges (they have

and looked upon the Hindus and the Mohammedans without distinction. With him caste had no meaning. The followers of this sect look up to him as an incarnation of God. According to them Kriṣṇa chandra (Kriṣṇa of Nadia), Gaura chandra (Chaitaṇya of Nadia) and Âula chandra are but one and the same, being one in three and three in one. They say that it was the Mahâprabhu (Chaitaṇya) himself, who after his disappearance from Puruṣottama (Puri), reappeared in the guise of Âula Mahâprabhu (lit. the great Lord). He had many names, such as Phakir, Thâkur, Sâin, Gosâin. Probably the name Âula was given him by his Mohammedan followers or admirers, from the Persian word Aulia, meaning one possessing divine powers. He is said to have performed many miracles, one among them being his crossing the Ganges with sandals on. Wise men of this sect say that their religion consists in worshipping the Maker alone, although idol-worship is also in vogue among them. The Gurus, spiritual preceptors of this sect, are styled Mahâshayas (i.e. Sires). In *Shiva Vandanâ* we have 'The seat was purified by Dharamaguru Mahâshaya (i.e. Sire Dharma),' and also the following line :—

"'We all the people assembled in the Gambhîrâ are devotees of Viṣṇu Bhâi Âula.'

"'The Gambhîrâ is purified, as we are devotees of Viṣṇu Bhâi Âula."

The meaning of Viṣṇu Bhâi here is not at all clear. Probably it was the devotees of Âula following the lead of his disciple Viṣṇu Dâsa that thus invoked their preceptor's benediction, or the composers of the above hymn might be direct followers of Sire Viṣṇu Dâsa. The Âula sect commences revelries at the dead of night and passes the rest of it in religious emotion, expressing itself in terrific roars and grinnings. It would thus be clear why the Gambhîrâ festivities should claim the attention of the devotees of Âula.

We quote below a song of this Âula sect :—

"All glory to our preceptor, to our Lord, mad after God and lost in his meditation. Oh, how charming are his virtues! we are even prepared to die rather than suffer them to be impaired in any way. His virtues have no end; owing to his deep religious fervour his body is besmeared with ashes instead of with sandal-wood paste

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brought as presents). Twelve times do they bow at your feet.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Visit with Shiva.

6. Here have we come to see you with buoyant hearts. Be pleased, O Lord, to appear before us and to look at us with golden (i.e. gracious) eyes.

We the followers of Âula do tender twelve bows at your feet.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Salutation to Vâṇa Râja.

7. There is Vâṇa Râja (King Vâṇa), a devotee of Shiva, decorated with pearls and corals. The whole surface of his golden body, decorated with gold threads, shines as though it were all gold. Twelve times do we bow at his feet.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Hanumân brings stones. The building of Chandi-mandapa.

8. Mighty Hanumân (son of Pavana, the Wind-god, and that monkey-follower of Râma, who crossed over to Ceylon and brought the news of his consort Sîtâ) fetched four pieces of stone Shrikânta, scraped and shaped them and poured molten glass over them. Then he covered the four roofs of Chandî-mandapa (temple) with white châmaras (chourie, the tail of the Tibetan yak used as a fly-brush).[1]

(i.e. to him perfumes and ashes have the same value). Oh, how deep in his meditation!—He is quite content with rags and torn Kânthâs (thin quilts), and receives a menial and a king equally: He looks about him with restless eyes. Who knows why and who can say where he is, whither he goes and where he is not?"

Bhârata-varṣîya Upâsaka-Sampradâya. (The Religious Sects of India.) By Aksayakumar Datta.

[1] In "Dharma-sthâna," of *Shunya Purâṇa*, we have:—

"The stones were laid in four rows; and many were the beautiful beams of gold that were used. The floor was paved with gold and looked like molten glass."

In *Dharmamangala* (of Ghanarâma):—

"The four roofs were covered with châmaras named Gangâjala

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Oh, what a God, etc.

The door-keepers of Shiva. Entrance into the apartment of Shiva.

9. Holding in their hands maces, the chatpati (fluttering or flexible ends; it is an onomatopoetic word meaning that which falls chatpat, as *smack* in "smack went the whip") of which is made of copper, and the nâla (lit. stem; hence the steady part, i.e. the handle) of gold, Nandi, Bhringi and Mahâkâla are mounting guard at the door of Shiva. The whole door is blocked by Bhaktas, too many to name them separately; and with sandal-wood paste and the sweet fragrance of the screw-pine-flower Nandi is quickly relieving them of their fatigue. Thus do all the bhaktas enter the room of Shiva, the Kâshîshwara (Lord of Kashi, Benares). Gambhîrâ is purified as we are Viṣṇu Bhâi (i.e. following the lead of Viṣṇu Dâsa) devotees of Âula.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Making of the drum-sticks for Gambhîrâ.

10. The Guru tied the money that he would require to live six months at one end of the piece of cloth that he was wearing and entered the forest with a triumphant bustle. There he found a smooth and slim tree on which leaves grew from the root and which closely resembled the Karavi-tree. He cut off its top and roots and took the middle portion. Then he skinned and scraped it and made two dhâka (drum) sticks out of it. The left-hand stick is Saraswatî and the right-hand one is Urddha (lit. high or elevated). Through the grace of Shiva-Durgâ, the drum-sticks of the Gambhîrâ are purified.

Oh, what a God, etc.

or purified with waters from the Ganges and were nicely decorated here and there with peacock-tails. Pennons were placed on pitchers of gold or silver and the floor was decorated with gold looking like molten glass."

Then again in *Shunya Purâṇa*:—

"The store-house was covered with peacocks (i.e. peacock-tails) and pitchers of gold adorned the floor."

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Shaping of the Dhâka (drum) out of Mango-wood. Stretching of the skin of Kapilâ on this frame.

11. When Hanumân went to Lamkâ (Ceylon) he ate mango (*mangifera indica*) fruits, throwing their stones about, and out of these sprang up trees known as Amarâvatî (lit. belonging to Paradise, mango-trees). The sprout shoots out first; then this grows into the tree. In every six months the tree grows taller by twelve cubits (6 yds.). The top and the roots (of one such tree) were cut off and the middle portion selected, scraping and skinning which a Dhâka (long drum) was made. The blacksmith shaped out an iron cauldron, and muchirâma (i.e. a skinner) stretched the skin of Kapilâ cow (on the wooden frame of the drum) after heating it on the cauldron. Uttering the name of Shiva, the stick was applied to the drum and the dead leather made forty-two sounds (i.e. sounded loudly).

Oh, what a God, etc.

The Bhândâra (store-house) and Chandi-mandapa purified.

12. The Guru sits in a purified assembly with his neck adorned with necklace of sateswari. I am going to purify the storehouse under orders of my Guru; out of kindness he has taught me (these) words (of purification). I am purifying the four corners of the Chandi-mandapa under orders of my Guru.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Purification of the seat by sire Dharma Guru.

13. Purified are my parents and purified is the vasumati (earth), from whom I have sprung. (Sitting on this seat) I have become as powerful as the gods (because) this seat has just been purified by sire Dharma Guru.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Salutation to land and water.

14. Make your obeisance to land and water and also to the hut of Shiva. Bow low also to the Sun and Moon, covering eight cubits of ground (i.e. falling flat on the ground with outstretched hands).

I bow low at the feet of Kâusena's son, Nayanasena

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Salutation to Nayanasena Datta.

Datta,[1] who introduced (by bringing it down as it were from heaven) the vrata (voluntary vow attended with ceremonies and worship) that has to be observed in honour of Maheshwara (Shiva).

Oh, what a God, etc.

Lord Shiva sowed seeds of the cotton plant.

15. In the month of Vaishâkha (April-May) the cultivator ploughed the field and in the month of Âṣâdha (June-July) Lord Shiva sowed the seeds of the cotton plant. After this he went to kuchni-pâdâ (hamlet of Koch women) in response (to a call from there) and on his return he collected the raw cotton and made it over to (his wife) Gangâ.

Gangâ making yarn from it. Shiva's work at the loom.

Gangâ made yarns out of this cotton and with those yarns Shiva worked at the loom and brought out a piece of cloth. It was washed by laundress Nitâi in the charming waters of the ocean of milk.

Theft of Pârijâta.

16. Jagannâtha went to Paradise and stole from there Pârijâta (flower tree of Paradise produced at the churning of the ocean as described in the *Purâṇas*)—the crimson Pârijâta. The gosâin took in his hands the end of the stalk as a pleasure cane (i.e. stick). (Thus) did the cane of heaven descend, i.e., on the earth; Lakṣmî (also), out of condescension, came down there.

Oh, what a God, etc.

17. Offer your salutation to land and water and also

[1] In *Dharmamangala* we come across one Lâusena, son of Karṇasena, who introduced and propagated the worship of Dharma. Probably Kausena and Karṇasena refer to the same person, and Nayanasena and Lâusena also are but different names of one and the same man. Karṇasena belonged to the Bania (mercantile) caste and his wife Ranjâvatî was the daughter of a Bania. Her brother Mahâmada belonged to the Datta family, the members of which alone are found to have been patrons of the Dharma cult.

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to Gambhîrâ. Bow low to the Dumura[1] (slang form of Damaru, a small drum shaped like an hour-glass and a favourite musical instrument of Shiva) to the right and to Hanumân to the left. Lo! there's Bhagavatî (another name of Chandî; lit. possessed of the wealth of divine energy in all its aspects) seated on the back of a lion. Make your obeisance twelve times at her feet. Salutation to the Gambhîrâ and obeisance to Bhagavatî.

Oh, what a God, etc.

18. Offer your salutation, etc. . . . We bow low twelve times at the feet of all the Gods that are here. Salutation to all the gods.

Oh, what a God, etc.

19. Offer your salutation, etc.

I have (thus) sung the salutation-hymns and do (now) make twelve bows at the feet of all.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Section V.—Specimen 3.

The late Michhuâl Dâs of the Mandala family of Kâsimpur in Malda recited the salutation-hymns in the Gambhîrâ and also played the part of Hanumân. His hymns are an exact copy of the chapter on Creation in the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta. From this it is apparent that in olden days the story of creation by Dharma Niranjana formed a part of the Gambhîrâ festivities in Malda.

1. Lord Dharma Niranjana of white complexion and dressed in white, is sitting on a white bedstead.[2] Salutation to Dharma Niranjana.

[1] In *Shunya Purâṇa* among the articles of Dharma's accoutrements, we have "There is the dumura (i.e. damaru) to the right and Hanumân to the left".

[2] We have the following lines in the hymns of Dharma in the *Dharmamangala* of Mânik Gânguli:—

"White is the complexion, white is the dhuti (piece of cloth tied round the waist), and the whiteness of the ornaments is such as

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Oh, what a God of Gods is our Shivanâtha, the giver (of boons).

Dharma assumes body.

2. Lord Dharma himself meditated on the globe (universe), and in doing this he brought into existence the head of Dharma.

Lord Dharma himself meditated on the globe, and in doing this he created the body of Dharma.

Oh, what a God of Gods is our Dâtânâtha (lit. lord of the givers of boons).

3. (Thus) has been born Lord Dharma, matchless in attributes, who will create the world and establish his glory. The saliva of Dharma fell down from his mouth, and from his hands and feet did water spring up on the earth.[1]

can be realized only through meditation. White is the sandal paste, white are the sandals on the feet, and the throne is also of the white complexion. The phontâ (sectarian mark on the forehead) is white, the clotted hair on the head is white, and the necklace is also made of white moons. White are the canopy and bedstead and white are the standard and its staff. (Thus) the whole house is bright and glorious with (a profusion of) white colour."

[1] As to the creation of water we have in the *Shunya Purâṇa* :—

"All of a sudden did water flow from the Vimbu (Saliva ?) of the Lord".

Âdi Buddha or Dharma while floating on water, seated himself on his conveyance Ulluka (gibbon). From the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta we learn of the creation of the lotus and of Dharma's sitting thereon. The lotus has been indicated as the seat of Buddha.

According to the *Shunya Purâṇa* the world was created from the filth of the body. Thus

"Nârâyaṇa took a pinch of the filth."

"In this way the Lord produced the materials for creation."

Students of Pali *Jâtaka* (Birth) stories are familiar with the legend that in one birth Buddha assumed the form of a markata (monkey) and performed the Prajnâ Pâramitâ.

Ulluka seems to appear occasionally in the form of Hanumân. It was from the person of Dharma that he was born. It seems, therefore, that the theories about the origin of Ulluka were based

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Oh, what a God, etc.

4. Gosâin Niranjana had only water about him, he stood on it and floated about on it. Once while thus floating, he came across a resting place, but this was only after fourteen yugas or cycles (the duration of the world is divided into four periods, each of which is called a Yuga) had elapsed. Creation of the ocean.

Oh, what a God, etc.

5. Ulluka came into being from the resting place of Dharma and stood in front with folded hands. The Lord of the Tridashas (immortals) smiled and said: "Tell me, O Ulluka, how many yugas (ages) have passed". Birth of Dharma's conveyance Ulluka.

Oh, what a God, etc.

6. Through all the ages that were passed in the redemption of Brahmâ, I was absorbed in the meditation of mantras (incantations); and through this I obtained a good boon; (so) you may now hear from me accounts of the fourteen yugas. Listen to the accounts of the fourteen ages, O you Formless One. There is no longer any sinner in all these three worlds (heaven, earth, and the nether regions).

Oh, what a God, etc.

7. The Lord created the lotus in front of him. Then he sat on it and meditated on the first origin.[1] Creation of Dharma's seat—the lotus.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Dharma Niranjana took his seat on a lotus and then found out the means of creating the world.

on the story of Buddha's assuming in one life the form of a markata.

According to the *Shunya Purâṇa* of Râmâi Pandit,

"The Lord yawned through fourteen yugas; and from his exhalation did the bird Ullukai (Ulluka) spring into existence."

[1] The lotus is used in the worship of Dharma. Even now cases are not rare where this flower is offered in the Dharma's Gâjan of Râdha and in the Âdyâ's Gambhirâ of Malda.

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डा. डिल्ली रमण रेम्मी
कल्याणी रेम्मी स्मारक

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8. Borne on many a leaf (he) started on his journey for the Pâtâla (the nether regions).

Oh, what a God, etc.

9. In twelve years he reached earth, took a quantity with his hands and besmeared his body with it. Then taking in his hands a quantity of earth, of the measure of a Vâtula (i.e. a very small quantity), Lord Dharma floated up in the form of shunya (void).

Oh, what a God, etc.

10. Again did the Formless Lord Dharma stand on his feet (i.e. on solid ground) and reflected within himself, and determining mentally the person on whom the earth should be placed, created it.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Creation of an elephant as the conveyance of Buddha or Dharma.

11. Lord Dharma became himself attached to an elephant and placed Vasumatî (the earth) on it. The earth with her rest, the elephant, was (however) about to sink down to the nether world.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Creation of the tortoise as the conveyance of Dharma.

12. Lord Dharma himself assumed the form of a tortoise and placed the earth on this tortoise.

The tortoise could (however) ill bear the weight of the earth; and with the elephant and the tortoise, the earth was about to sink down to the nether regions.[1]

[1] In the *Shunya Purâṇa*, however, we have such lines as—

"Placing his lotus-marked hand, the Lord said 'Be steady'.

"(And) it was from this lotus-marked hand that the body of the tortoise came into existence."

Ideas about the elephant are even now extant among the Buddhists. The story of su-hasti (lit. good elephant) is a proof of the Buddhist artists' fondness for the elephant. The mystery of the creation of an elephant by Dharma is laid bare before us in the salutations, etc., said to have been made by herds of elephants before Buddha. The Buddhist Tântrists (followers of the system of Tantra) are found to worship Buddha in the form of a tortoise, since the tortoise is supposed by them to have sprung from the body of

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Oh, what a God, etc.

13. In this way growing wiser at every successive stage of creation, Dharma Niranjana ultimately created a serpent, and resting on him the burden of the earth found rest and peace for himself.

Creation of the Serpent.

He (Niranjana) snapped asunder the sacred thread of gold about his neck and this was transformed into a hydra-headed serpent. Niranjana gave him the name of Vâsuki and bade him bear the burden of these three worlds.

Oh, what a God, etc.

Just after its birth, Vâsuki felt very hungry. And no sooner had Dharma Niranjana flung aside his earring, to satisfy the serpent's hunger, than the frog came into being, and this unfortunate creature has ever since been food for Vâsuki and his progeny. (This story has been told also in the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta.)

"Go you, Vâsuki, be you immortal. Him I give shelter whom I do create."[1]

Oh, what a God, etc.

Dharma Among the ten incarnations of the Hindus also, Kurma (tortoise), like Buddha, has been honoured with a place. In many a part of Western Bengal, Dharma is worshipped in the guise of Kurma. As, for instance, in the village of Kâleswara in Burdwan there is a tortoise-like image of Dharma.

In the MS. of an old poem, *Jagannâtha Vijaya*, composed by Mukunda Bhârati, there are proofs of the tortoise being regarded as omniscient.

[1] In the *Shunya Purâṇa* also Vâsuki is reported to have been created in the same way.

"Having placed at your feet (i.e. before you for your consideration) all these arguments, I advise you to snap asunder your sacred thread of gold and to fling it into the waters.

"Having heard these words of Ulluka, Lord Niranjana instantly took off his sacred thread of gold;

"Then he snapped it asunder and cast it off into the waters; and there up sprang from it the serpent Vâsuki with a thousand hoods."

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Hereafter the invocations of the other deities, nay, all the other parts of the *Vandanâ*, are found to be similar to those of the other hymns to Shiva.

At the time of Ârati (wave-offering) at dusk the Bhaktas are found to stand on one foot only as long as the hymns are recited, and all this time they repeat mentally also the name of Shiva.

"Some stand on, on one foot, and with uplifted arms and with concentrated minds glorify and repeat the name of Dharma" (*Dharma mangala*).

Section VI.—Specimen 4.

We have obtained the following *Bhakta-vandanâ* (hymns by Bhaktas) from Viṣṇu Dâs, the present mandala of the Gâjan of Bâbâ Ishâneshwara of the village of Kudmun in Burdwan. Such Salutation-hymns are met with in many of the villages of this district. The other ceremonies of Gâjan are almost identical in all the centres.

(*a*) *The Opening of Doors.*[1]

Opening of the Eastern door.

1. "Lo and behold! there, on his bull, is Shiva, the lord of immortals, with a trident and a red stick in his hands and dressed in a tiger-skin.

"Rise, get up, my brother, the keeper of truth—lo! the Eastern gate of the Lord is opened."

In this way, five other doors—viz. Western, Southern and Northern doors and the gates of Heaven and the Gâjan—have to be opened. The hymn has to be sung with the face turned towards the direction of the door which is to be opened, and with the opening of each door the sevèral names of Shiva are recited, followed by a flourish of music.

[1] Similar to the "Opening of Doors" in the *Shunya Purâṇa*.

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(*b*) *Awaking from Sleep or Meditation.*

Awaking from sleep.

1. "Lord, rise from thy sleep of meditation and look upon thy merry votaries, who have surrendered themselves absolutely at thy feet (i.e. mercy)."

(Recitation of his names, with dance and a flourish of drums.)

2. "Embracing Kârtika and Gaṇesha, thou art lying in a sleep of oblivion. How are we then to make our obeisance at thy feet?"

(Dance, etc.)

3. "Desist from sleep, O Lord of Gods, and sit in the centre of thy bedstead, with Gaurî constantly on thy left side."

(Dance, etc.)

4. "Lord, thou art Master of the Gods, and, not to speak of the lesser ones, even Hari (Viṣṇu) and Brahmâ sing thy eulogy."

(Dance, etc.)

5. "Lord Tripurâri (destroyer of the demon Tripura), give up thy fondness for sleep, show mercy to thy devotees and satisfy their desires (?)."

(Dance, etc.)

6. "Take in thy hands thy shingâ (horn used for blowing) and damaru (a small drum), and keep thy bull to thy left; and let the Vâsuki (king of serpents) stand on with unfolded hood. Hold on thy head the genial Gamgâ (tutelary deity of the river Ganges), and let thy forehead be adorned with the moon. Inside the last let the (brilliant) round mark called phontâ shine (gloriously), and let thy body be adorned with a wreath of bones and the ashes of cow-dung, and put on the armour of meditation (yoga-pâtâ) (?)."

(Recitation of the names with dance, etc.)

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7. "O Lord with three eyes, remove our troubles and obstacles which are beyond human control. We do absolutely rely on thee, and have renounced every other prop."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

8. "We have in the *Vedas* and the esoteric Shâstras that Lord Gamgâdhara (lit. holder of Gamgâ on the head) is the God of Gods. Be pleased, O Conqueror of Death, to forgive our faults."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

9. "O Shiva, leave the Kailâsa mountain (the abode of Shiva) on the back of thy bull, and, O Tripurâri (destroyer of the demon Tripura), be pleased to satisfy our desires and to instal thyself in our Gambhîrâ. Five times do we bow to thy feet."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

(*c*) *Hymns in Honour of the* (*Ten*) *Quarters.*[1]

Hymns in honour of the Quarters.

1. "The temple, the threshold of the door, and every other article in and about the temple are protected (by means of charms against the entrance of or molestation by wicked spirits). So also is protected the Tulasi (the holy basil, *ocimum sanctum*) of the Âdyâ. We do also sing the hymn of Saraswatî. Make your obeisance to Râma and Lakṣmaṇa to the right and to Sîtâ and the heroic Hanumân to the left.

East.

"The glorious sun is in the East, and five times we make our obeisance to him."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

N.B.—The words from "The temple . . ." to

[1] Similar to that in vogue in the Gambhîrâs of Malda. Cf. "Make your obeisance to the house, to the door and to the hut of Shiva".

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". . . the heroic Hanumân to the left" are repeated at the beginning of each hymn.

2. ". . . There is Bhîma (lit. terrific) Kedâra (a name of Shiva) in the North, to whom we make our obeisance five times." North.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

3. ". . . There is Ârura Vaidyanâtha (a name of Shiva) in the West, to whom we make our obeisance five times." West.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

4. ". . . There is the glorious Jagannâtha in the South, to whom we make our obeisance five times." South.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

5. ". . . There is King Indra in the Paradise, to whom we make our obeisance five times." Paradise.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

6. ". . . There is the serpent Vâsuki in the Pâtâla, to whom we make our obeisance five times." The Pâtâla, i.e. the Nether Regions.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

7. ". . . There is the guardian deity in the village, to whom we make our obeisance five times." Tutelary Deities of Villages.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

8. ". . . There is Bholâ (lit. lost in meditation) Maheshwara in the Gambhîrâ, to whom we make our obeisance five times." Obeisance to Bholâ Maheshwara in the Gambhirâ.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

9. ". . . There is the Lord Dharma in the Gâjan, to whom we make our obeisance five times." Obeisance to Dharma in the Gâjan.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

10. ". . . There are thirty-six Sâins and seventy-two Bhaktas (devotees) in the Gâjan, to whom we make our obeisance five times." Obeisance to the thirty-six Sâins in the Gâjan.

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

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(*d*) *Salutation-Hymns* (*in Eight Stanzas, hence called Shivâṣṭakam*) *to Shiva.*

"One should meditate on the eternal God of Gods, resplendent like a silver hill, etc., etc."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

(*e*) *Salutation to Sadâ Shiva.*

"I make my obeisance to Sadâ Shiva, the destroyer of sins and the repository of all attributes—the all-powerful god with a gracious face and with his cheeks decorated with ear-rings of snakes, who was formless at first and then became a person (i.e. assumed a form)."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

(*f*) *The Dhula-sâpata Bhaktâ* (*or the Bhakta that Dusts the Temple of Shiva with his Hair*).

Dhula-sâpata Bhaktâ.

Of the Sannyâsis of Gâjan, one dances on one foot, and in this way comes to Shiva at the place of Gâjan with the fist clenched over his head, and is made to recite the following hymn by the Mandala. He has to dust the floor of Shiva's temple with the hair of his head.

The hymn which has to be recited at the time of dusting the temple.

1. "Lord, thou art like Atisini, like Vatisini : Vatisini is like Panchavatisini, which is again like Dharma Adhikâri (Lord of Dharma), and Dharma Adhikâri is, as it were, the feet of God. Beyond the seven oceans and near the Valluka Sea is the seat of the eleventh Rudra, the servant of whose servants is the Dhula-sâpata Bhaktâ."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

2. "The temple has to be dusted with hair, under orders of the gods. The dust of heaven flies off to

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heaven; that of the earth remains on the earth; and let the rest go to the storehouse of our father (i.e. Shiva)."

(And now all the Sannyâsis will cry together:) "Glory to the Dhula-sâpata Bhaktâ!"

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

(*g*) *The Jala-sâpata Bhaktâ*[1] (*or the Bhakta that brings a Pitcher of Water to the Temple*).

The Jala-sâpata Bhaktâ.

Of the Sannyâsis of Gâjan, one will hold with his two hands a pitcher of water upon his head, and, following the lead of the Mandala, will recite the following hymn, dancing on one foot all the while:—

1. "Lord, thou art like Atisini, etc., etc."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

2. "The water of heaven goes up to heaven; that of the earth remains on the earth; and the rest goes to the storehouse of our father (i.e. Shiva)."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

(*h*) *The Salutation-Service of the Sannyâsis before the Four Doors of the Gâjan Temple.*

Salutation before the Eastern Door.

1. "The Purvapâra is in the East. Who is it that guards his door? It is the lion that guards there; it is the rau (fire) that guards there. The names of my foes are written on plates of copper, etc., and thereat my face becomes upturned. Mrityunjaya (Conqueror of

[1] Similar to the "Jala-pâṣâṇa" (water and stone) hymn of the *Shunya Purâṇa*: "The ghata (an earthen water-pot symbolizing the in-filling power of God in nature) and the pata (pictorial representation of the god on a piece of canvas) are the sources of salvation. Orders have been given to bathe the ghata. The water of the Devi's ghata is well known in the world. Take, O Puspapâṇi (lit. he who has a flower in his hand—a name of Shiva) the water of the ghata that has been (formally) bathed."

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Death, i.e. Shiva) himself is at the Eastern gate. Salutation to Shiva!"

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

Salutation before the Northern Door.

2. "Vahuti Vahu Pare is in the North. Who is it that guards his door? It is the lion, etc., etc. The Conqueror of Death is himself at the Northern gate. Salutation to Shiva!"

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

Salutation before the Western Door.

3. "Hanumanta is in the West. Who is it that guards his door? It is the lion, etc., etc. The Conqueror of Death himself is at the Western door. Salutation to Shiva!"

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

Salutation before the Southern Door.

4. "Bhava-rudreshwara is in the South. Who is it that guards, etc., etc. The Conqueror of Death is at the Southern door. Salutation to Shiva!"

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

(*i*) *The Daily Final Orders to the Sannyâsis when going Home; or, the Final Orders after the Festivities of each Day are held, technically called "Orders by the Thâkuras or Gods".*

1. "Lord, thou art like Atisini, etc., etc. . . . the servant of his servants."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

Orders by the Gods.

2. "Bhaktas named Âvâla-atita and Bhaktas named Chhatrishasain Vao are making their obeisance five times to the Thâkuras or gods.

"What are the pleasures of the gods?

"The gods are pleased to declare that they have been highly pleased with the five salutations. You are now free to return home, frisking and frolicking and singing.

"The champâ flower adorns the head of Shiva.

"And he holds the oda flower in the name of his Bhaktas."

(Recitation of the names, etc.)

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CHAPTER III.

THE GAMBHÎRÂ: A POPULAR FORM OF SHAIVA CULT IN EASTERN INDIA.

SECTION I.—THE SEVERAL PARTS OF THE GAMBHÎRÂ FESTIVITIES.

THE Gambhîrâ festivities consist of :—

1. Ghata-bharâ, the filling up with water of an earthen jar, symbolizing the infilling power of the god to be worshipped.
2. Chhota Tâmâsâ, smaller amusements.
3. Bada Tâmâsâ, greater amusements.
4. Âhârâ, a particular worship, and
5. Chadaka Pujâ, the swinging or whirling religious ceremony, observed by the Hindus on the last day of the month of Chaitra (March-April).

The dates for these several festivities are thus fixed. If the month of Chaitra, when the Gambhîrâ worship is held, closes on the 30th day, then the Ghata-bharâ takes place on the 26th, the Chhota Tâmâsâ on the 27th, the Bada Tâmâsâ on the 28th, the Âhârâ on the 29th, and the whole ceremony is wound up with the Chadaka Pujâ on the 30th.

The Ghata-bharâ.

Generally, on the day previous to that fixed for the Chhota Tâmâsâ, the ceremony of Ghata-sthâpana, i.e. installation of the Ghata, earthen jar, as the symbol of

Installation of the Ghata as symbol of the god to be worshipped.

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the god to be worshipped, is held. This rule is not, however, observed in all the centres of the worship. According to their own traditions, in some places it takes place a week and in others three or nine days before.

There are persons who observe severe austerities during the month of Chaitra as a means of propitiating the God Shiva, and earning an uncommon religious merit. They observe fasts, abstain from many of the enjoyments of life and go through many other hard vows. They are really temporary votaries of the god and generally called Sannyâsis. It is the privilege of the chief of them to help in preparing the offering of rice and the other items of the Gambhîrâ worship. In some places this office is found to have become hereditary, but in most places it has become salaried. In former times the Bhaktas or votaries observed the customary vows and injunctions with punctiliousness from this day, but the practice seems to have almost died out now. The Gambhîrâ-house is lighted from this day.

The lighting of the Gambhîrâ.

On this day of Ghata-bharâ, a general meeting is called, and in that meeting it is formally settled unanimously to fill up and instal the Ghata, and the Mandala sanctions it. After dusk, the Brâhmaṇa priest, in the midst of a loud music struck up by large drums, known as Dhâkkas and used only at the time of worship, goes to and fills up the Ghata with water from the nearest tank or river, in accordance with a practice that has obtained from time immemorial, and then instals it according to the injunctions of the Shâstras (Scriptures) on this point. No other ceremonies are held this day.

The Chhota Tâmâsâ.

On the day fixed for the lesser festivities no ceremonies are held; but the worship of Hara-Pârvatî (Shiva and his wife) commences on this day, and those who have in

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the name of Shiva voluntarily taken the vow (in expectation of propitiating him and receiving some definite favours from him), dress themselves as, and apparently adopt the life of, Bhaktas or Sannyâsis, i.e. votaries. The majority of these Bhaktas are boys and are known as Vâla-bhaktas (boy-votaries).

The Bada Tâmâsâ.

Bada Tâmâsâ processions, piercing of bodies with arrows.

The next day at some auspicious time between sunrise and sunset the customary worship of Hara-Pârvatî is celebrated. In the afternoon a procession of Bhaktas starts out. This procession is a very entertaining one and closely resembles that formed by the Sannyâsis of Gâjan on the day of the Nîlapujâ (worship of Hara-Gauri on the last but one day of the month of Chaitra) at Kâlighât in Calcutta. In every Gambhîrâ all the Bhaktas, young and old alike, have to take part in this festivity. From every Gambhîrâ-pandal they start out dancing. Dressing themselves, according to their own tastes and pleasure, as male and female ghosts and goblins, as makers of fireworks, and their wives as Râmats (devotees of Râma), as players on bagpipes or as Santhals and other aboriginal tribes, etc., they proceed from pandal to pandal.[1] Some of them pierce either side of their chests with small arrows looking like tridents, wrap round the outer ends of these tridents pieces of cloth soaked in oil and then put fire to them. In this way they go out dancing, some one continually throwing powders of dhupa (a fragrant gum-resin burnt before idols) on this fire. This festivity is brought to an end before the close of the day.

In the evening a sort of mask-play, known as Hanumân-mukhâ (mask of Hanumân) is held. Some one

[1] There are very often several pandals in one village or town at different wards.

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among the votaries puts on the mask of Hanumân and makes for himself a long tail with unripe banana leaves. Round the outer end of this tail dry banana leaves are wrapped, when the player stands up before the spectators. Then two persons hold up before him a piece of cloth and fire is applied to his tail; and with this burning tail he leaps over the piece of cloth and returns in the same way to his former place. This seems to be a fair representation of the monkey-god Hanumân's leaping across the sea and burning Ceylon, the piece of cloth representing the sea. The story is well known to readers of the *Râmâyaṇa*.

Phulbhângâ, calling by names, dancing in various guises.

After the part of Hanumân is played, the Vâlabhaktas march out in a body, crying aloud "Shivanâtha ki mahesha" (Oh, what a god of gods is our Shivanâtha), and dancing to the music struck up by drums, towards an adjacent tank. Here they break down twigs from a jack tree and make up a bundle with these and a hemp plant. Then they put these bundles on their breasts and perform their ablutions. Thereafter they return to the Gambhîrâ-pandal dancing, as before, to the music of drums, and "calling by names" (meaning probably crying aloud "Shivanâtha ki mahesha") they bow low and place the bundles in the temple. Then, as on the previous day, they go through the salutation-hymns and return thereafter to the bundles. The priest now sprinkles "shânti jala" (holy water calculated to confer peace and happiness) over them. Then when flowers offered to and thus blessed by Shiva are placed over these bundles (technically called phula, flower), the devotees take away their respective "flowers" (bundles) and start a dance, firmly holding them against their breasts. This continues till, in obedience to a special note struck up by the drum, they roll themselves several times on the ground, bow low simultaneously and then

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place their "flowers" in the Shiva-Gambhîrâ. This is technically known as Phula-bhângâ (lit. breaking of flowers). Then wave-offerings are presented to Shiva-Durgâ (i.e. Hara-Gaurî), and thereafter the whole Gambhîrâ temple is illumined, as it were, with garlands of lights. It is at nine in the night that dances on small scales are started; and these include mask-dances of ghosts and goblins, of Râma and Lakṣmaṇa, of Shiva and Durgâ, of an old man and his old wife, of a horse, of fairies, of Kârtika (God of War, son of Shiva and Durgâ), and of the Châli (the decorated background of an image). The dancing is attended with the music of long drums and Kânsis (a musical instrument made of bell-metal). When the farewell note is struck by the long drum, the dancers cease dancing and go away for another Gambhîrâ-pandal. The musicians generally get rewards from the rich spectators, and in some cases they obtain even new pieces of cloth.

Shiva both blamed and praised.

Gradually various songs commemorating the merits and demerits of Shiva are sung in his honour. At this time Bhaktas come in troops into the Gambhîrâ and amuse the spectators with their songs and dancings.

Songs are also sung, exposing the wickedness of the countryman or fellow-villager that has done during the year, no matter whether covertly or overtly, anything unjustifiable. The singers dress themselves as males and females and sing these songs either in chorus or individually. Besides, hymns in honour of Shiva, and songs of a lighter character, are also sung on the occasion.

The dancing of the mashâna, the exciting music, and river-bath in the morning.

About daybreak but before sunrise the dancing of the mashâna, technically known as mashâna nâcha, takes place. The word mashâna properly means a cemetery or crematorium; here it seems to mean the Goddess of Destruction. One of the Bhaktas plays the part of this goddess. He dresses himself as a woman with

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dishevelled hair, with her forehead besmeared with vermilion, with her heaving breasts encased in a kânchali (a sort of short jacket) and with her wrists adorned with bracelets of conch-shells. Decorated with ornaments and with her face painted in such a way as to strike terror into the hearts of the spectators, this mashâna dances with various gestures; and her attendants throw powdered resin into the fire in an incense-pot and hold up, by way of appeasing her wrath, the smoke thus produced before her face. This appeasing ceremony is observed also during the dancings of Kâlî and other Goddesses of Terror in the Gambhîrâ-house. When the drummer strikes up the note of stirring up (Mâtâna) then the mukhâ (mask) dance reaches the highest pitch of frenzy. At this time the priest places a garland of flowers and the smoke of burnt incense before the maskers representing Kâlî and others, and they become appeased after turning their faces in the direction of the smoke and inhaling it, and the mashâna Kâlî rolls herself on the ground. After this the Bhaktas travel from Gambhîrâ to Gambhîrâ till 8 or 9 a.m., and then, bathing together in the river, return to their respective homes.

The Âhârâ Pujâ.

Particulars of the Âhârâ Pujâ and its procession.

On the day following the Bada Tâmâsâ, after the mashâna dance and the worship of Hara-Pârvatî are over, the ceremony of homa (casting of clarified butter into the sacred fire as an offering to gods) and the feeding of Brâhmaṇas and virgins, take place. On this day an unripe bamboo or its branch is planted on the ground in one side of the pandal, and a mango and some blossoms of the banana tree with some other articles are tied to it. Then this post is duly worshipped, and this worship is known as the Âhârâ Pujâ. If, after the Âhârâ Pujâ is over, any one passes through the Gam-

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bhîrâ with his shoes on or with his umbrella spread over his head, he is regarded as an offender and is punished by the Mandala. The practice has, however, died out now. During the third part of this day also, a procession like that of the third day starts out from the Gambhîrâ.

Cultivation by Shiva.

On the day of Âhârâ, cultivation by Shiva is represented[1] before the spectators in the following way. Some plough the field, some sow paddy, some plant the plants and others devour paddy like cattle. Then comes the reaping of the harvest, and last of all the Mandala or the chief votary brings the scene to a close with the question, "What's the quantity of the paddy grown?" The prospect of the year's paddy is determined according to the answer given.

Volvâhi.

Gambhîrâ songs, their muddâ (theme).

At night on the fourth day songs of a special character are sung in chorus by two or more persons. These songs are technically called Volvâhi. They are not only different in name, their tunes also are different from those of the previous night. On this night no mask-dance takes place. The festivities of this day are performed with songs and music only. The tunes of these songs are quite characteristic.

The theme of a song is technically called its muddâ. Every song must have a muddâ of its own, and the quality of the song depends on the quality of this muddâ. To explain more clearly what is meant by the muddâ, let us take the following case. Suppose there was an earthquake this year. The song that will dwell on this

[1] This is done in the same way both in Dharma's and Shiva's Gâjan. The description of Shiva's cultivation in the *Shunya Purâna* is of a piece with the descriptions in well-known Indian works on cultivation.

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earthquake will be taken to have the earthquake as its muddâ. There are expert composers of songs for the purpose. They are called Khalifâs or Professors. If the audience will suggest to them themes they will compose songs on them. In singing those songs which have nuptial quarrels or any other matter connected with both males and females as their themes, the singers dress themselves as such and play their respective parts.

The Sâmsole Chhâdâ (Letting off of the Sâmsole Fish).

Sâmsole Chhâdâ, crossing the Vaitaraṇî and Agni-jhâmp (fire-jump).

In a basin a small Sakula fish is kept alive. Afterwards it is taken to the nearest tank or river and let off into it. This is known as Sâmsole Chhâdâ or the letting off of the Sâmsole fish. In the evening of the day of Âhâṛâ a small hole is excavated on the ground and filled with water. Then a fish is let off into it and the Bhaktas leap across it. This ceremony is observed till now in the Gambhîrâ of Dhânatalâ in Malda. Then a hole is dug in front of the Gambhîrâ and two bamboo posts are planted on opposite sides. Thereafter another bamboo post is placed across them and the branches of trees making up the "Phulbhângâ" are fetched and placed on the hole. Then fire is applied to these branches and powdered resin is occasionally thrown into the fire thus kindled. One by one the Bhaktas now get up on the horizontal bar, tie their feet to it and then hang themselves down and rock to and fro seven times with their heads downwards inhaling the choking smoke of burnt resin rising up from the fire beneath. In some places this is known as Agni-jhâmp (jump into fires). A description of this ceremony is to be found also in *Dharma mangala*. Thus it is said there :—

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"Over the sacrificial fire burning bright, they rock to and fro with their feet upwards, and heads downwards rolling on the ground."

"Powdered resin is thrown profusely into that."

The ceremony of Sâmsole Chhâdâ seems to be but a Malda edition [1] of the "crossing of the Vaitaraṇî" [2] (the river that is supposed to run between the land of the living and the land of the dead and that must be crossed by the departing soul), to be found in Dharma's Gâjan in West Bengal. Here the Vaitaraṇî is excavated on the ground and filled with water, and a fish is let off into it. A Pandit (priest) standing, cane in hand, on its brink, recites incantations for the purpose, and the Sannyâsis cross the Vaitaraṇî, catching hold of the tail of a cow.

"Dânapati ferries (passengers) with the help of a cow's tail."

According to the *Shunya Purâṇa*, "Under the waters of the Vaitaraṇî live and move sundry-coloured fish".

Dhenki-mangala.

Dhenki-mangala and reception accorded to the sage Nârada.

In connexion with Dharma's Gâjan are represented the Dhenki-mangala ceremony and the advent of the sage Nârada on a husking pedal (made of a large and long block of wood). In the Gambhîrâs of Malda also both these ceremonies are observed, the former under the name of Dhenki Chumâna. On this occasion the Bhaktas carry on their heads into the Gambhîrâ a dhenki coloured with turmeric paste and dotted with vermilion marks, attended with the joyous shout of "Ulu, Ulu"

[1] This festivity is held in the Gambhîrâs of Dhântalâ and some adjacent places on the days of the Bada Tâmâsâ and the Ahârâ. According to the injunctions in the *Shunya Purâna* and *Dharma-pujâ-paddhati*, a tank is excavated to bathe therein for attaining religious merit.

[2] The Styx of Hindu mythology.

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uttered by women. One of the Bhaktas sits on it representing Nârada. The rest, after circumambulating the Shiva temple with this Nârada on his dhenki, place it on the couriyard of the Gambhîrâ-house.

On this point we have in the *Shunya Purâṇa* :—

"The gods ordered the four Kotâlas (constables) to fetch Nârada without delay.

. . . . . .

"Hearing this the lord of sages (Nârada) equipped his conveyance, dhenki, and started on it."

And thus he came to the Vâramati-house, i.e. the place of Gâjan.

The flight of the dhenki is described below :—

"Attended with the songs of frogs, the three-legged dhenki started on its aerial journey for the place of the gods."

"As soon as Nârada thus appeared before them, the gods welcomed him cordially and seated him on a jewelled throne."

"The Lord of Tridiva (heaven) worshipped the dhenki with garlands of fragrant flowers; and celestial damsels cheerfully received it with due forms, uttering the joyous shout of 'Ulu, Ulu'."

Reception is accorded to the dhenki in the Gambhîrâ in the following way :—

"The wise men present recite the Vedic hymns and receive the dhenki with leaves of the piper betel (afterwards cast away), attended with the shout of 'Ulu, Ulu' uttered in close succession."

After the dhenki is thus received with the uttering of Vedic hymns, with the shouts of "Ulu, Ulu" and with betel leaves, the last one thrown away, Râmâi Pandit invokes it, for conferring blessings on Dânapati.

He says :—

"This is my earnest prayer that Thou wilt never look

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with disfavour on Dânapati; rather that Thou wilt ever have his good at heart."

Even now on the occasions of Anna Prâshana (the ceremony with which rice is given for the first time to a child), Upanayana (i.e. investiture with a sacred thread) and marriage, the good housewives of Bengal do not forget to pay their respects to the dhenki and invoke its blessings.

This is what is known as Dhenki Chumâna in Malda.

Section II.—The Several Centres for the Gambhîrâ Festivities.

The festivities that are held in connexion with the worship of the various Hindu gods, but more especially of Shiva, have in course of time received various designations in various places. They were, however, originally one, and are everywhere held in temples named Gambhîrâ. Hence it is apparent that they are but the Gambhîrâ (festivity) under different names.

Along with differences in names, differences have also crept in in the attendant ceremonies. In some places the festivities have received the name of Gâjan; they have widely spread under the names of Shiva's Gâjan and Dharma's Gâjan; while in Orissa the name Sâhiyâtrâ has also been applied to them.

Should an attempt be made to give a geographical account of the places where this festivity is held at the present day, an interesting chapter of the history of religion would be opened thereby. We name at the outset the places where Gambhîrâ festivities are now seen to be held. These places are—Dinajpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Malda and Moorshidabad.

It is on the eastern side of the Ganges that the

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Gambhîrâ festivities are observed. In some villages of the Moorshidabad district, situated on the other side of the latter, they are also seen to have prevailed. On inquiry, however, it has been learnt that these villages have recently been peopled by men from the eastern side of this river.

Festivities like the Gambhîrâ are found to be held also in Orissa, Midnapore, Birbhum, Burdwan, Nadia, Hughli, 24 Parganas, Khulna, Jessore, and Faridpur, but under the name of Sâhiyâtrâ in the first two, and of Gâjan in the rest.

The word "Gambhîrâ" is found to occur in connexion with the ceremonies that are held in celebrating the Gâjan in Birbhum, Burdwan, Hughli, etc. This leads us to infer that their old name was really Gambhîrâ, although afterwards for some inevitable cause this was changed to Gâjan. The Gâjan of Bâbâ (Father, lord) Ishâneshvara of village Kudmun in Burdwan was formerly held in the Gambhîrâ-Mandapa (temple named Gambhîrâ after the festivity that was first held there). It has been found on inquiry that it was due to the influx there of the goldsmiths of Gauda, the ancient capital of Bengal (now in ruins in the district of Malda).

Of all these festivities the Gambhîrâ of Malda deserves the most special notice, for this particular reason, that the original character of the Gambhîrâ has been fully preserved here.

Section III.—Popular Decorations.

Paper lotuses.

The first thing that attracts the attention of spectators at the Gambhîrâ celebrations of Malda is the decoration of the dancing-house or pandal attached to and forming the front of the Gambhîrâ-temple. For it has a pecu-

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liarity of its own, such as is not observable in the decorations of the temples or of the Bâro-yâri Mandapa (a temporary temple erected by public subscription for the worship of a god or goddess on a particular occasion) of the other districts. Here almost the whole of the Gambhîrâ-Mandapa is thickly decorated with paper lotuses of various colours. Over that part of the pavilion which is reserved for dance and music, nothing is spread and no arrangement is made for the party to sit upon, so that they have to play their respective parts on the bare ground.

There are reasons for thus decorating the entire Gambhîrâ with paper lotuses of various colours. This practice has obtained without interruption from very early times. In connexion with Dharma's Gâjan[1] the dehârâ (temple) of Âdya (lit. the original, i.e. the first, the primitive deity) was decorated, as now, with lotuses. No doubt in olden times the Gambhîrâ-Mandapa also looked brave and gay with live lotuses culled from nature. Now, however, this has become an impossibility for two reasons; first, flowers are not so abundant now as in those days, and secondly, the festivities extending over three or four days, the beauty and grandeur of the decoration cannot be kept unimpaired unless fresh

[1] In the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta we find that Dharma created a lotus and sat on it. Thus he says:—

"The Gosâi (the All-Powerful Lord) conjured a lotus before himself.

"He then took his seat on it and began to mutter prayers to the First Cause." ("Sâhitya Pariṣat Patrikâ," No. IV, p. 251, 1317, B.S.)

In *Dharmamangala* of Mânik Gânguli also we have "There are many-petalled lotuses in full bloom"

"Getting down into the waters, I plucked innumerable lotuses."

"Then meditating on, and saying 'Salutation to,' Brahman, I cast those lotuses in limitless waters."

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flowers be procured every day. For these reasons the decorators find it more convenient to have recourse to paper lotuses.

The Gambhîrâ-Mandapa is not now decorated in the same way as it was in former days, e.g. fifty years back. The Gambhîrâ-temple and the attached dancing-hall looked brisk with fresh lotuses of lively colours and with the genial glow of lights burning with ghee (clarified butter), and were filled with the scented smoke of burnt resin and frankincense.

The dancing-hall was lighted by Sarâ or earthen cups. This was done in the following way. Upon the top of a bamboo-post was placed an earthen cup and in it a wick drenched with mustard oil. The projecting end of this wick was lighted and occasionally the lamp thus made was replenished with oil from a bamboo tube. Incenses were also burnt here. Torches made of rags fastened to the end of a stick and drenched with oil were also used on the occasion. When the votaries appeared on the scene to dance and sing, these torches were kindled, and in the glaring light thus made they exhibited their various performances. With lighted ukâs, bundles of dried jute plants, the performers went from Gambhîrâ to Gambhîrâ. No arrangements were made for the public to sit upon, but they brought their own seats with them. For such respectable personages as the Mandala, a sort of bed was spread with coarse sackcloth. The organizers, however, entertained the audience with tobacco and smoking apparatuses. Gradually, in order to ward off the sun, a canopy of sackcloth was hung up over the dancing stage with the help of bamboo-posts. Some open iron lamps of a peculiar kind, with four faces and known as chomackas, were suspended here and there with iron chains. These lamps were also placed on big stands, from three to five feet

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high. To regulate the flow of oil, a thick lump of clay was put in the centre of the lamp. This prevented the oil from gathering about the wick, but did not stand in the way of its drawing it slowly. To add to and complete the effect of the decoration, a few pictures drawn on cloths, known as Râmakelî and besmeared with clay, were hung up here and there.

With the advance of luxury the cost of decorations has enormously increased at present.

In course of time, with the rapid flow of luxury, large canopies, big chandeliers, wall-lamps, lanterns, etc., with candles, pictures by the Art Studios of Calcutta, and the canvas paintings of Kâlighât (southern portion of Calcutta, named after the well-known image of the Goddess Kâlî located there) have come to replace the old articles of decoration. Nay, pictures by the well-known Indian artist Ravi Varmâ, high-class kerosine lamps, flags and standards, garlands of various patterns, bouquets, birds of art, fruits and blossoms, gaslight and many other items of foreign decoration are not infrequently resorted to, to make the Gambhîrâ-house look grand and glorious even in the eyes of modernists. The sitting place also with its carpet, bedding, big pillows, silver-capped hubble-bubbles, bears clear testimony to the influence of new ideas within the walls of the Gambhîrâ. Chairs and benches, âtardâns (vessels from which otto is poured), and golâppâses (vessels from which rose-water is sprinkled) are also richly in evidence. The heads of the spectators are cooled every now and then by showers from syringes filled with rose-water, and coloured torches are lighted to add to the effect of the dancing.

The primitive character of the Gambhîrâs preserved in Varind.

The lotus-decorated Gambhîrâ-mandapas of the old days have not, however, been wholly extinct. The Gambhîrâs of the Koch, Palihâs (nicknamed Vângâls, or rustics) of Varind (the outlying northern villages of Malda district), have even now preserved their ancient character.

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Section IV.—The System of Administration.

In every village there are one or more Mandalas or headmen. The Mandala is the most important and wise man of the village. In olden times all the village affairs were settled and managed under his directions. An estimate of his position may be formed from the following Sanskrit saying, "*Grâmasya Mandalo Râjâ*, i.e. the head-man is the king of the village". He was held in esteem even by the Zamindar or landlord. Rents and taxes were realized through him with greater ease and less disturbance. He was bound, for this ensured success, to render help to Government officers whenever they came to the village on some business or other. In later times the Government created the post of Sâhâtana, vesting him with many of the duties formerly discharged by the Mandala. Even now many families are found to retain this title, shorn of its dignity and duties.

Separate Mandalas for separate communities.

There is a Gambhîrâ under every Mandala and no Gambhîrâ is found that is not under the control of a Mandala. In every village there are separate Mandalas for separate communities. Although this holds good in Malda also, and although accordingly there are separate Gambhîrâs for each of the several castes, yet there is to be found here a common Gambhîrâ-worship celebrated by a General Assembly, as it were, of all the castes and sects. It is called Chhatrisi (lit. belonging to thirty-six, i.e. an indefinite number, hence it means common) Gambhîrâ. The post of the Mandala of this common temple is held by one of the sectarian Mandalas. The meeting, called Vaithaka, that is convened to discuss and settle some business of this Gambhîrâ, is called after it the Chhatrisi Vaithaka or the sitting of the thirty-six.

Grants for Gambhîrâ.

In former days the Zamindar granted to the Mandala some rent-free land or reduced his dues below the pre-

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vailing rate of rents as a mark of respect for him and also to enable him to maintain his dignity. Besides this he also made some small allowance, in the shape of rent-free lands, for the establishment of the tutelary deities of villages and the Gambhîrâ-worship. For this reason old Gambhîrâs are even now found to be in possession of some landed property. In mediæval times the assets from these lands were quite sufficient for the expenses of Shiva worship, but now they can meet only a part. Primitive Gambhîrâs have thus rent-free lands of their own, through gifts from Zamindars or rulers, while those of more recent origin have no such source of income. There are, however, some among the latter that are found to hold land rent-free or rent-paying from quite different sources.

The Mandala exercises a great sway over the community of which he is the head. It is he who punishes the social culprits ; and these can exonerate themselves from the obloquy of having violated a social law or custom and the consequent punishment inflicted by the Mandala, only by making, in the name of the Gambhîrâ or its Lord Shiva, some gifts of land or some other equivalent things. Besides, if any one die without an heir he makes over his property to the Gambhîrâ. These gifts are casual sources of income.

How the number increases.

In course of time the members of the Mandala family increase in number and there occasionally break out feuds among themselves ; and on such occasions, among other things, the Gambhîrâ also turns out to be an apple of discord. The villagers also side with the contending parties, and thus there arises a necessity for the establishment of a separate Gambhîrâ for the seceding branch of the Mandala family and its supporters ; and they have to forego their claims to the old Gambhîrâ. In this way in course of time there spring up more than one Gam-

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bhîrâ in a village, without, however, any claims to the funds or any part of them from the original one. In some villages, however, only the Chhatrisi Gambhîrâ is to be found. Besides these, there occasionally leap into existence amateur Gambhîrâ organizations also, which generally die out after a year or so. These are not controlled by any Mandalas. They are appropriately styled Sakher Gambhîrâs, i.e. those for pleasure.

Budget of the Gambhîrâ.

A short while before the time fixed for the celebration of the Gambhîrâ festivities, a general meeting, called Vaithaka, of the villagers is convened to settle the financial question. In this meeting an estimate is formed by the Mandala, with the assistance of the other gentlemen present, of the probable expenses to be incurred, and thereafter a list of subscriptions is prepared. This is what is known as the Bhângan of the Gambhîrâ. The Vaithaka is held in awe by the villagers; for in it all social offences are also tried and punished and the "Gambhîrâcess" is instituted.

Section V.—The Name of the Institution.

Gambhîrâ means a house of God, a temple.

The question may naturally arise how the festivities and ceremonies that are held in honour of the God Shiva in the Râdha country (western part of Bengal, comprising the Hughli and Burdwan districts, the northern division being Varendra) and generally known there as Shiva's Gâjan,[1] have come to receive the appellation of Âdya's Gambhîrâ (Gambhîrâ of Âdyâ the first goddess, the origin of creation) in Malda. In mediæval times houses like Chandî-mandapa (a house for the worship of the goddess Chandî, personified divine energy in full splen-

[1] It is a comprehensive name including the festivities that are held and the self-tortures that are undergone by the devotees of Shiva in the month of Chaitra (March-April), beginning on the first day and ending with a worship of the god on the last day.

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dour) were called Gambhîrî or Gambhîrâ in this part of the country. At least, we learn from the *Songs of Govindachandra* that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (?) the name Gambhîrâ was exclusively applied to houses of the above description. For we find there :—

"The Queen had the two messengers tied down in the Gambhîrâ."

"The ascetic sat down in meditation in the Gambhîrâ and came to know [of this]."

"Hâdipâ [spiritual preceptor of Govindachandra's mother] applied himself to religious meditation in the Gambhîrâ."

"[He] left behind his own body in the Gambhîrâ and taking, through his illusive powers, the airs of an astrologer, [he] set out."

From the above uses of the word Gambhîrâ, it is clear that it refers to a house of meditation or worship like the Chandî-mandapa.

The dwelling-house of the goddess Chandikâ.

Householders kept Buddha-pada (foot-print of Buddha) or Dharma-pâdukâ (sandals used by Dharma) in the Gambhîrâ of their houses. In course of time the goddess Âdyâ came to be installed and worshipped there. And afterwards when she received worship under the name of Chandikâ, her ghata (a jar of water symbolizing her in-filling power) was also placed in the Gambhîrâ. Then again, by and by, Chandikâ came to be regarded as the wife of Shiva, and joint images of Hara (another name of Shiva) and Gaurî (another name of Chandikâ) were installed in the Gambhîrâ. Thus we see that in the very temple where during Buddhistic supremacy the festivities of Dharma were held, during Shaiva supremacy worship was offered to, and festivities held in honour of, Hara and Gaurî.

It was not only in Malda, Rangpur, Dinajpur and

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Shiva's temple in the Râdha country.

adjacent places in Varendra or North Bengal that the Gambhîrâ was transformed into Chandî-mandapa or Shiva's temple, the same practice came to obtain also in the district of Burdwan in Râdha or West Bengal. From the panegyrics offered to Shiva in the Râdha country in the course of his Gâjan we find that Gambhîrâ meant here the temple of Shiva. Thus, in the panegyrics of Bâbâ (Father) Ishâneshwara (a name of Shiva) in the course of his Gâjan at the village of Kudmun in Burdwan we come across such lines as these :—

"There in the Gambhîrâ is Maheshwara (god of gods), who is ever lost in meditation. Five times do I make my obeisance at his feet."

It is clear that in the Râdha country also Gambhîrâ meant the temple of Shiva.

Vaiṣnava Scriptures.

Consulting the Vaiṣṇava Scriptures also one would find that Gambhîrâ meant a temple of Shiva, or a temple generally. This will be clear from the following couplet in *Chaitaṇya Charitâmrita* :—

"I will not sleep at night in the Gambhîrâ.

"For it results in the interior of the mouth and the head being ulcerated or scarred."

In this book Gambhîrâ has been definitely made to refer to a temple and to contain four doors. Lord Chitaṇya (1485-1533) once passed a night there.

The following lines from the manuscript of *Chând Vâul* by Kedârnâth Datta Bhaktivinoda may also be quoted :—

"Inside the Antar-gambhîrâ (inner temple) at the Âkhâdâ, a house of congregation of the followers of Chaitaṇya, there is a bed spread. There are two dimly burning and flickering lights on two sides of it. The main gate has been closed. In the centre of the bed is sitting the chief Vâul (a class of religious minstrels) Kisor Dâsa."

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Also in the incantations that are meant for the offering of oblations to the manes of the departed, we come across the word Gambhîrâ, and Gambhîrâ there seems clearly to mean "a house".

It also occurs in the panegyrics that are offered to Shiva in Orissa. Thus :—

"Hymns in honour of Mahâdeva (Shiva).

"I bow down at the feet of the inhabitants of Kailâsa [the residence of Shiva] so that they may be pleased to leave Kailâsa for this place. May the wielder of the Khattânga [a peculiar weapon used by Shiva] and enemy of the god of passions be pleased to turn here for a moment to remove my afflictions. He is the much beloved husband of Gaurî and the only object of adoration by the ascetic. Bearing Gamgâ [the tutelary deity of the Ganges] upon his head, he bears the name of Gangâdhara. Bells are ringing fast in the ghora Gambhîrâ, the inner apartment, and lord Ardha-chandra [a name of Shiva, as his forehead is adorned with a half-moon], as luck would have it, is preparing himself. A dark inner chamber in Orissa.

"Standing up, Kavi Karṇa makes it known that he has, to some extent, succeeded in winning the grace of Mahâdeva."

In the above quotation we have "Bells are ringing fast in the ghora Gambhîrâ". Hence it is clear that the image of Shiva was installed in a very dark inner apartment of the house, and it was this inner apartment, this temple of Shiva, that was called Gambhîrâ.

It is further clear from the above account that as Gambhîrâ meant the temple of Shiva or a temple generally, it was here that Shiva was worshipped and his festivities were held. In course of time the festivities of Shiva held in the Gambhîrâ came to be regarded, *after the name of the place*, as Gambhîrâ-worship.

There is a further reason for the contention that

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Gambhîrâ means a temple of Shiva. In mediæval times the temple of Shiva used to be decorated with Gambhîrâ or lotus (*nelumbium speciosum*). Hence it will not be unreasonable to conclude that the festivities that are now known as Gambhîrâ came to be regarded as such owing to the fact that they were held in a place called Gambhîrâ, which was decorated with Gambhîrâ flowers.

In *Shiva-Samhitâ*, again, we find Gambhîra as a name of Shiva.[1] From this it also seems probable that just as the place of worship of the goddess Chandî has received the name of Chandî-Mandapa, the place where the festivities were held in honour of Shiva under the name of Gambhîra has become known as Gambhîrâ-Mandapa. It may thus be the name of the deity that has furnished the name of the *locale*, and ultimately that of the stage and the performances.

[1] Cf. *Yugâdikrid yugâ varto Gambhîro vrisa-vâhanah.*

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CHAPTER IV.

THE GÂJAN: A POPULAR FORM OF SHAIVA CULT IN EASTERN INDIA.

Shiva's Gâjan.

THE current name for the festivities that are held in honour of Shiva towards the close of the month of Chaitra (March-April), and the swinging ceremony that is performed on the last day of this month (generally known as Chadaka-pujâ), is the Gâjan of Shiva. Those who have witnessed this Gâjan ceremony will clearly understand that it is this Gâjan that has received the name of Gambhîrâ in Malda. The literal meaning of Gâjan is "Festivities held in honour of Shiva," and the word seems to have been derived from the Sanskrit word "Garjana," meaning a loud clamour, since the ceremony is performed in the midst of a loud clamour caused by the shouting and singing of the Sannyâsis and the noisy music struck up by long drums.

The Shaiva cult has long exercised a considerable sway over Bengal. Not a single village but has not its own temple of Shiva. The festivities and the theatrical representations of the popular form (called Yâtrâ) that are held annually in the month of Chaitra in honour of Shiva, are held in these village temples. Several other ceremonies are also performed in this connexion.

The system of management by the Mandala.

As in the Gambhîrâ festivities, the system of management by the Mandala is also observable in some places

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in connexion with the Gâjan of Shiva. The title of Mandala and the system of management by the Mandala are still in vogue among the Podas and similar low-class people in the villages of Gopâlanagar, Chetlâ, Tâliganj, etc., in the Twenty-four Parganas. And, as in the Gambhîrâs of Malda, in the Gâjan of Shiva also, the Mandala is found to exercise a considerable sway. Nay, in many places it is he who manages all the affairs in connexion with the Gâjan festivities; and it is he who is regarded as the master of the ceremonies.

Before the commencement of the Gâjan of Shiva, the Mandala, following the time-honoured custom on such occasions, makes all necessary arrangements for the ceremonies to be held in connexion with this festival. The Âdi Shiva of the village has some landed property set apart for his maintenance. From its income are met all the essential expenses of the local worship. Should this source of income be found insufficient for the purpose, subscriptions are raised to augment it. Besides the Mandala, the Mula-Sannyâsi (or chief votary) is also a necessary factor in the due performance of the Gâjan festivities. Attached to every temple of Shiva where these festivities are held, there is an hereditary post of Mula-Sannyâsi, although originally it was filled by selection from among the votaries of the time. It is this chief votary who makes all the necessary arrangements for the Gâjan festivities, subject to control and direction by the Mandala, and who is primarily responsible for the due execution of the latter's requirements.

The Order of the Gâjan Festivities.

Shiva's Gâjan may be divided into the following six parts :—

1. Selection of Sannyâsis, called Sannyâsi-dharâ.

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(In some places it is also called marking, i.e. placing a phontâ, or mark, on the forehead of the Sannyâsi.[1])

2. Shaving and abstinence from meat and fish, called Nijhâd-kâmân.

3. Haviṣya (food consisting of boiled rice and ghee only) and Ghata-sthâpana (installation of the sacred pitcher).

4. Mahâ-haviṣya (food consisting of fruits and roots only). On this day the festivities commence.

5. Fast, festivities, and the worship of Nîlâvatî.

6. Chadaka, the swinging ceremony. On this day the festivities are brought to a close.

1. *Sannyâsi-dharâ.*

Six days before the Chadaka, the Mula-Sannyâsi enters the village in the afternoon, attended by loud music produced by the beating of long drums. Those who have taken the voluntary vow of becoming Sannyâsis gather together on the occasion. In some cases the Mula-Sannyâsi is found to put marks of sandal-paste on their foreheads (and thus mark them out, as it were, as votaries of Shiva); in others, after assembling, they get themselves shaved. The Mula-Sannyâsi is shaved first of all, and, after this is done, the votaries go in a body to bathe in the adjacent river or tank, dancing all the while to the music of long drums. After bathing, they take their supper, avoiding fish and meat, from separate plates. This ceremony is called Samyama or abstinence.

Abstinence from fish and meat.

2. *Nijhâd-kâmân, or Shaving.*

Next day, all the other volunteer Sannyâsis get themselves shaved in the afternoon, after they have taken their food (avoiding fish and meat), and assemble

[1] The votaries of Gambhîrâ and Gâjan are technically known as Sannyâsis. But generally speaking the term denotes persons who abstain from all worldly desires and enjoyments.

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in a place to dance to the music of long drums. All those who intend playing the parts of Sannyâsis, have to get themselves shaved on this day ; for later than this no Sannyâsis are taken. The shaving of this day is in some places called Nijhâd-kâmân. Those only who desire to be Sannyâsis, or who, by way of propitiating the god, have voluntarily promised to serve as such, are enlisted in the ranks of Sannyâsis. They have invariably to go through the following course : Eating of food consisting of boiled rice and ghee only ; eating of fruits only ; fasts ; passing sleepless nights ; dusting the temple (called dhulat) ; and swinging.

3. *Haviṣya.*

Ghata-sthâpana, Gâjane Shiva and Utari-parâ.

For the performance of the above ceremonies the services of the Gâjane Brâhmaṇa[1] are not required. They are required for the first time on the day of Haviṣya, when the Ghata-sthâpana (i.e. installation of a water-jar as symbolizing the in-filling power of the god) takes place. First the Sannyâsis go to bathe attended by the music of the long drums, and return with water and flowers in a vessel and sit down in wet clothes at the place of Gâjan. Then the Gâjane Brâhmaṇa puts round their necks a garland of small thread-balls strung together on a kusha grass, and touches their heads with the Gâjane Shiva.[2] As soon as this is done, they are

[1] The Gâjane Brâhmaṇa (so called from his officiating in the Gâjan festivities) is inferior to Brâhmaṇas of the high order, because he is the priest of the low-class people. He is superior, however, to Brâhmaṇas of the lowest order. He officiates in the Gâjan festivities as priest for Sannyâsis recruited from all the orders of society.

[2] If the image of Shiva in whose honour the Gâjan is held is permanently fixed and immovable, one or more small stones are used as his representatives, and one of these stone representatives of Shiva the Gâjane Brâhmaṇa takes up in his hands and makes the Sannyâsis touch it. After this, the stone is made over to them and they wor-

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recognized as real Gâjane Sannyâsis and become entitled to worship Shiva. The above-mentioned garland of thread-balls is technically called Uttariya (shortened by the Sannyâsis into Utari), and the ceremony of putting it on is called Utari-parâ. After all this is gone through, worship is offered to Shiva. The Gâjane Brâhmaṇa closes this worship by making the Sannyâsis recite hymns especially composed in honour of Shiva. The other hymns are recited, following the lead of the Mula-Sannyâsi, or in some places, of the Mandala himself. In different villages, slightly different hymns are sung in honour of Shiva; the underlying idea, however, is the same in all. The Mula-Sannyâsi takes the lead in all matters, the lesser ones have always to carry out his orders. He is held in greater esteem than any one else. The supper of the Sannyâsis consists of boiled rice and ghee only.

4. *Mahâ-haviṣya.*

On the day of Mahâ-haviṣya, the festivities of Gâjan are started and the Sannyâsis have to go through the salutation service, the offering of worship, the reciting of hymns, etc. The whole day is passed in observing these ceremonies, and at night, after worship is offered to Shiva, the ceremony of Phul-kâdhân, or "The Placing of Flowers" (explained below) is performed; and thereafter, among the votaries, some satisfy their hunger with one or two fruits and a small quantity of the water of the Ganges, and others partake of boiled rice with ghee, taking only three mouthfuls of it. This ceremony is called Mahâ-haviṣya. Among the essential duties on this occasion are the daily performance of

ship it in place of the original image. Processions are started carrying this stone in a palanquin or on the head of a Sannyâsi to some other place. It is this stone which is called Gâjane Shiva.

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dance, music and song, the reciting of the hymns of Shiva and the narration of his virtues.

Phul-kâdhân.

The Phul-kâdhân, or Phul-châpân, is one of the essential ceremonies that are observed daily. This ceremony is performed as follows. First, with a view to securing blessings for the king, a leaf of the marmelos tree, drenched in the waters of the Ganges, is placed on the head of the image of Shiva, and to the accompaniment of music from the long drums the names of Shiva are recited. If the leaf falls off itself from the head of Shiva, it is taken as a sign that the god has been pleased with the ceremony and has deigned to show his approval. Then the same ceremony is repeated several times to invoke the blessing of the deity on the Zamindar (landlord) and the Sannyâsis. And, last of all, those who desire to be cured of their diseases, or who desire to have sons born to them through the favour of the god, come forward and repeat the ceremony.

A Procession.

In the afternoon the Sannyâsis adorn their persons with various ornaments and set out in procession with canes in their hands and bearing aloft on their shoulders a palanquin inside which is placed the Gâjane Shiva. This procession is attended by the music of the long drums. In this manner the Sannyâsis march to the temples of Shiva in Gâjan-talâ, or place of Gâjan, in the different adjacent villages. Here they exchange embraces with, and dance and sing in the company of, their brother-workers and thus add to the importance of the occasion.

Every Gâjane Sannyâsi joins in the procession that marches out, according to local usage, with dancing, music, etc., from his own Gâjan-talâ to the original and principal Gâjan-talâ of the district. Here he joins his forces with those from other adjacent centres of Gâjan, and joins in the festivities that are held here

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with music, dance and song. In some places the songs are sung in the same manner as the songs of the Kavi.[1] In this there are two rival parties contending with each other in making extempore verses. These songs are divided into the three parts of Châpân (a seemingly unanswerable charge made against the opponent after he has answered a previous charge), Chiten (a charge which is likely to excite the opponent), and Javâv (i.e. answers and rejoinders). There is in Tâliganj, a suburb of Calcutta, such an ancient and principal place of Gâjan, known as the "place of Vudâ (old) Shiva"; and Sannyâsis from the adjacent Gâjan-talâs of Kâlighat, Bhawanipur, Chetlâ, Calcutta and Savjibâgân assemble here and pass the whole night with dance, song and music. Here also such festivities as are held in the Gambhîrâs of Malda take place. The passing of sleepless nights with such festivities and merrymakings is what is known as Jâgaraṇ. The underlying idea of the songs is to some extent similar to that of the songs of Malda, for they consist likewise of hymns of Shiva and poetical recitals of his merits and demerits.

Shiva's Crocodile, and the lighting up of the house of Nila.

In many places of the Twenty-four Parganas, with the commencement of the Gâjan festivities, worship is also offered to the Crocodile of Shiva. By the side of the Gâjan-talâ a huge crocodile is shaped out with clay and its body is nicely finished and plastered. Its scales are made with the stones of the tamarind fruit and the interior of its mouth is besmeared with vermilion. An infant is shaped out with clay and placed before it in such a posture as to indicate that the crocodile is about to devour it. It is this crocodile which is known as Shiva's Crocodile. It has to be made as soon as the

[1] Competitive versifying (cf. *Sangerkrieg*) before large audiences has been a regular institution in Bengal's literary and social life.

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Gâjan festivities are started. At dusk the temple of Nîla (a name of Shiva) is lit up. To place lamps in this house is calculated to confer high religious merits on women.

5. *Fasts.*

Worship of Nîla. Music and dance in the guise of Shiva, Kâlî, etc., before the emblem of Shiva.

The next day the Sannyâsis take no food whatsoever. At noon worship is offered and other ceremonies observed with great éclat. The daily worship is offered after the Phul-kâdhân ceremony is gone through. Most of the Gâjans of the Hughli district go to Târakeshwar on the occasion. A large number of processions assemble there. In the same way processions from adjacent places assemble at some well-known (old) place of Shiva in every district. Early in the morning of the Nîlapujâ day, the Gâjane Sannyâsis and many other people of Calcutta and the neighbouring places flock to the temple of Kâlî to offer worship there, and the painters of Patuâtuli at Kâlighat, on payment of necessary fees, paint the Sannyâsis, according to their pleasure, as Hara, Gaurî, Shiva, Kâlî, male and female ghosts and spirits, animals, ascetics and mendicants. They pass in troops, dancing and singing, through groups of spectators, into the temple of Kâlî, and, after offering worship to the goddess, bathe themselves and return; some of them, however, return dressed and decorated in the same way as they go. In the morning festivities of the Nîlapujâ day, Hindus and Mohammedans are found to join together. These festivities are similar to those of Malda, in which such mask dances as those of Châmundâ, Kâlî, Vâsulî, etc., take place; and it shows clearly that in mediæval times these festivities were held throughout the length and breadth of Bengal.

After these ceremonies have been observed, the

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Chadaka Post (on which devotees of Shiva swing on the occasion of the swinging ceremony performed on the last day of the month of Chaitra) has to be "awakened".[1] This is done in the following way. The Sannyâsis, uttering the name of Târakeshwara Shiva get down into the waters of the tank in which the Chadaka Post remains immersed throughout the year, and begin to look about for it. Tradition has it that the Chadaka Post is endowed with superhuman powers—for some time it plays hide and seek with the searchers, diving deep into the waters and swimming like a fish from place to place, thus giving the Sannyâsis an opportunity to make themselves merry in the waters. Be that as it may, it is a fact that the Sannyâsis divert themselves for some time in the water under this pretext, and at length come up with the Post and take it to the place where it has to be planted. As in the Gambhîrâ festivities, Vâṇa fodâ (piercing the body with sharp hooks), Banti-jhâmp (jumping over scythes), Kântâ-jhâmp (jumping over thorns), and Agnidola (i.e. swinging over fire) and such other feats are also exhibited on a day fixed for the purpose, before the swinging ceremony is performed. In many places in connexion with the Gâjan, another feat, named Mashâna-kridâ, is also exhibited, in which the Sannyâsis, taking up dead bodies and severed heads, dance a wild dance, known as Tândava.

The Awakening of the Chadaka Post. Piercing the body with arrows, jumping over large bill-hooks, etc.

In this Gâjan of Shiva, the Sannyâsis sing hymns of Shiva, versified accounts of creation, hymns and salutation-songs in honour of other gods and goddesses, and many other songs regarding Shiva, such as his dressing himself in the guise of a Shânkhâri (shell-cutter) and

Songs and hymns in honour of Shiva.

[1] After the Post is "awakened," worship is offered to it on the embankment of the tank in which it remained immersed.

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His cultivation.

cultivation of the land by him. This cultivation-song is also sung in the Gambhîrâ of Malda, and, as here, in that song also reference is made to the growth of paddy. A detailed account of this cultivation is to be found in *Shivâyana* and *Shivagîtâ*. As advised by his wife, Pârvatî, Shiva desired to take to cultivation,[1] but he needed lands for the purpose. Pârvatî then advised him to apply for them to Indra, the King of Gods. Accordingly Shiva went to the place of the latter and addressed him thus :—

"If you will grant me lands, I may take to cultivation and thus satisfy the wishes of Pârvatî."

Indra replied : "Being the landlord, how is it that you ask your servant for lands ?"

Shiva said : "There are some difficulties about it, O Shakra [Indra]. I fear lest you should quarrel with me at the harvest time. It is not reasonable to rely on the words of one who is absorbed deeply in worldly affairs. If you grant me a lease, I may rest assured that no difficulties will arise in the future."

Indra asked Shiva to state the extent and location of the lands he wanted, and then :—

"Hara [Shiva] asked for the limitless fallow ground near the settlement of the Kochas, excluding lands already granted [to others] as settlements for the service of gods and the grazing of cattle, or as remuneration to priests."

Thereupon the son of Kashyapa (i.e. Indra) "granted to the god of gods a lease of Devottaraland [i.e. land endowed for the support of a god]".

And "Digamvara [lit. stark-naked, a name of Shiva], binding the lease with the cord attached to his damaru [a peculiar small drum] and blessing Indra [for

[1] Similar to the growing of paddy, as described in the *Shunya Purâṇa*.

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his goodness] made for the place of Yama [God of Death]".

Why is Shiva going to call at Yama's? It is to borrow the services of his buffalo. This and his own bull are to be yoked together for ploughing the fields.

And Yama, "as soon as requested [lit. commanded], made over the buffalo to him".

Then Vishwa-karmâ (the chief engineer and mechanic of the gods), with a view to making the implements of agriculture, held up the trident of Shiva and said :—

"The implements of agriculture are : one pâshî, one ploughshare, two jalois, one spade, one sickle and one ukhun. Let us make the pâshî weighing five maunds,[1] the ploughshare eighty maunds, the two jalois together two maunds, the spade one maund, the sickle eight maunds and the ukhun eight maunds."

Then Shiva, stopping the holes in the bellows with his tiger-skin, set to work with it and the ghosts supplied charcoal to the furnace from burning places called funeral pyres. He held the trident with the help of a pair of tongs in his left hand, and knelt down beside the furnace with much ado. With the help of his hands and feet he worked the formidable bellows, from which continually went forth the sound of "detayyâ".

When Shiva grew anxious how to secure seeds for the growth of paddy, "Kâtyâyanî [Pârvatî] said : 'How is it, my lord, that you have nothing at all? There are plenty of seeds in the house of Kuvera [treasurer of Shiva]: go and get the quantities you require from there'."

The questions of getting a ploughman to till his fields for him, and also a pair of bulls, were settled thus by her :—

"We have in our own house the old bull, which is

[1] 1 md. = 80 lbs.

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exceptionally strong. It may be yoked with the buffalo of Yama. There is the plough of Valâi [Valarâma, step-brother of Lord Shrî-Krishṇa, noted as being the wielder of a plough] and there is Bhîma [the most powerful of the five brothers in the *Mahâbhârata*] who will do well as a ploughman. Where, then, are your difficulties?"

Then follows a detailed account of the various processes of cultivation.

When the preliminaries of cultivation were over and the time of harvest came, "Bhîma bowed to Vishwanâtha [lit. Lord of the Universe, a name of Shiva] and went to the fields, with a scythe weighing ten maunds in his hands. He rushed breathless, and in the course of two seconds only mowed the crops. The paddy thus obtained measured but two hâlas [a very small quantity]."

"Hearing that it measured only two hâlas, Shiva ordered it to be cast into fire."

Thereupon Bhîma applied fire to the heap of paddy "and blew it with his mouth". The paddy burnt through eternity, and it was from this that paddies of different colours were grown.

Even now the cultivation scene is enacted in connexion with the Gambhîrâ festivities.

Bhagavatî puts on a pair of conch-shell bracelets.

Shiva visited the house of Himâlaya (father of Gaurî, wife of Shiva) in the guise of a seller of bracelets made of conch-shells, and helped Gaurî in putting on a pair.

"The ladies sat in the courtyard surrounding Mahâmâyâ [lit. the creative power of God, so called from the illusory nature of the world; hence a name of Bhagavatî, or Durga] and Mâdhava [here meaning Shiva, although really a name of Krishṇa or Vishṇu]. These two sat on beautiful seats facing each other, Pâr-

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vatî with her face eastward and Hara with his westward."

To make the bràcelets suit the wrists, the palms of the hands had to be sorely squeezed. At this "Menakâ [mother of Pârvatî] said sorrowfully: 'Oh! how long will my tender girl be able to stand these squeezings?' She then admonishingly said: 'Rub your pair of bracelets to make the diameter longer. (This is not the first time that we see one put on a pair of bracelets of conch-shells.) By the time I have grown so old, I myself have put on ten or twelve pairs.' Mâdhava replied: 'What shall I do, ma'am? You do not know how hard are the hands of your daughter. I know what trouble she has caused me. How can I help it, ma'am, when the hands are as stiff as stick?'"[1]

This song in commemoration of Pârvatî's putting on a pair of bracelets of conch-shells is a holy one with married women, and many of them listen to it with rapture and devotion. Many such songs are sung in connexion with the Gâjan of Shiva.

On the day of fast such diversions as Banti-jhâmp, Kântâ-jhâmp, Pât-bhângâ, etc., are held.

The Banti-jhâmp.—The Sannyâsis get upon a high platform made of bamboo. Below this a number of iron weapons of the form of Bantis (Indian fish-knives) placed cross-wise along a line on a platform made of banana tree, are held up by a number of other Sannyâsis, a little in front of the first platform. Then from this first platform the Sannyâsis, one by one, jump down upon the weapons with extended arms. As soon as each falls down thus, he is covered with a piece of cloth and taken to the image of Shiva, where the

[1] In Dharma's Gâjan of West Bengal, this scene is enacted in connexion with the marriage festivities of Âdyâ.

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Gâjane Brâhmaṇa offers him a flower, already offered to Shiva, by way of conferring on him the benediction of the god.

The Kântâ-jhâmp.—The Sannyâsis take their stand on a raised platform with a bundle of the branches of a thorny tree fastened to their breasts. Below, a piece of canvas is held aloft in front of them and they jump down on it one after another. In some places, branches of the thorny tree are placed on the piece of canvas itself.

The Pât-bhângâ.—This is not observed in all the centres. In this case the Sannyâsis take their stand on the bamboo-platform with some fruits tied in a corner of their cloths and throw them down among the crowd of spectators, many of whom try their best to catch some of these bundles before they reach the ground. If they succeed in doing this, with some object in their minds, they believe that object will be realized.

The Dhunâ Podâna, or burning of resin.—This ceremony is performed in two ways. In the first, men and women fast the whole day and take their seats in wet clothes on one side of the temple of Shiva, with earthen cups called Sarâ, free from black spots, on their heads, held with their two hands and also placed between their two knees. Pieces of wood are placed on these Sarâs and fire applied to them. Then, when the Brâhmaṇa throws some flowers and sprinkles water of the Ganges upon them, powdered resin is also thrown into the fire. Some go through this ceremony also with infants on their knees.

In the second method, two bamboo posts are planted on the ground and another piece of bamboo is tied to their heads. Below this a hole is dug on the ground and filled with fire. Then the Sannyâsis, one by one, tie their feet to the horizontal bar and seven times swing

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their bodies headlong over the fire, into which is then thrown powdered resin.

Nîlâvatî-pujâ.—Women say on this occasion :—

"As the result of my placing lights in the temple of Nîla, I shall have access to heaven [after death]."

At dusk the women light up the temple of Shiva with lamps burning ghee. In the Bengali almanacs also it is recorded that on this day the goddess Nîlâvatî should be worshipped. Next day

6. *Chadaka-pujâ*

is performed with great éclat. In olden times on this occasion the place of Chadaka used to become a scene of stirring incident, and difficult performances such as the Vâṇafodâ took place there. The Chadaka festivities have of late been prohibited by law.

On this day the marriage ceremony of Shiva is found to be represented in some places. This festivity also is performed about the end of the month of Chaitra, and is given with great pomp in Navadwipa (Nadia), Sântipur and some other places.[1]

[1] In the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta, Shivà is married to Âdyâ, and in *Dharmapujâ-paddhati* Dharma is married to her. Âdyâ is but another name of Ârya Târâ, the Buddhist goddess. Hinduization of mediæval Buddhist deities would thus be apparent.

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CHAPTER V.

FOLK-FESTIVITIES IN NORTH BENGAL AND ORISSA.

SECTION I.—GAMBHÎRÂ.

The Gambhîrâ of the Vângâls.

THE general name for the low-class people of Varendra (Northern Bengal), such as the Kochas, the Polihâs,[1] etc., is Vângâl. The name might well be translated by the English word "rustic". The Vângâls offer worship to Shiva towards the close of the month of Chaitra (March-April), as others do. Their Gambhîrâs are absolutely free from the remotest influence of luxury. In many cases the temple itself is in a dilapidated condition, and the emblem of Shiva almost buried under earth; inside the house only such poor articles of worship as the châmara (yak-tail used as a fly-brush), dried garlands of flowers, wooden masks of Kâlî and other gods and goddesses, old earthen vessels and incense-pots make up the furniture. The courtyard is overgrown with grass and weeds. Only at the time of worship the floor is cleared and besmeared with cow-dung, and a part only of the courtyard is cleansed.

On the occasion of the Gambhîrâ festivities the Vângâls are actuated by sincere devotion and religious feelings. They have no priest to officiate for them—they themselves perform their own worship. Even the drum is played on by them. The chief Sannyâsi, or Gunî, as he is otherwise called, plays the part of the priest.

[1] Descendants of Mongol invaders of North Bengal (tenth century) according to Mr. Chanda. *Vide* Banerji's *Pâlas of Bengal.*

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Their creed: worship of ghosts.

The jâgaraṇâ (i.e. passing sleepless nights) is observed with dance and song and other festivities. It is said that ghosts and spirits of the village and also of other adjacent villages do possess and serve them. They believe in the existence of supernatural beings and offer worship to them in every house. They do not feel much tempted by the thought of the life in heaven after death; they are heard to remark: "It is no good to be a Kriṣṇa or Viṣṇu. We want to be ghosts and goblins, that we may continue to enjoy the comforts of home." And actuated by this faith, they build little altars in their houses and besmear them with vermilion. They say that after the visible dissolution the material bodies or the materialized spirits of their deceased ancestors abide on in these altars. At the time of the Gambhîrâ worship, these ghosts and spirits are worshipped in every house. According to them, ghosts of one village quarrel with those of another; and when a Bhakta is possessed by a village ghost his words are not true; but when he is possessed by one of a different village his predictions come out true.

"Bhar," or Possession by the Ghost; the Mask-dance and the Cultivation by Shiva.

In the Gambhîrâ festivities of the Vângâls the ghost worship is performed with much greater pomp than the Shiva worship. In connexion with this, the Chhota Tâmâsa is no doubt held like the Bada Tâmâsâ, but even this not in the same manner as in the other Gambhîrâs. When the "bhar" descends on the Sannyâsi, i.e. when he becomes possessed, then he performs very queer motions of the head, flounderings and contractions of the hands and feet, grimaces and dancings, and utters terrible shrieks. Upon this, the chief Sannyâsi understands that through the possessed man a ghost or the Mashân Châmundâ Kâlî herself has appeared on the scene, and sings, in his or her honour and for purchasing his or her pleasure, songs calculated to

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avert evils (technically called Shântipâtha) and offers flowers and sacred water of the Ganges. After this the dancers are made to dance separately, each taking his turn on hearing his special note struck out by the drum. These dances are wild and ecstatic (like those of Shiva) and are attended with furious shrieks and exclamations. From the possessed or chief Sannyâsi many will then get medicines for their diseases, and unfortunate women often find medicines wherewith to tame their indifferent husbands. The jâgaraṇa night is wholly passed with such mask-dances, relieved now and then by musical performances and Shiva's hymns. The scene of the cultivation by Shiva is also enacted in the following way. A boy or a young Sannyâsi throws a quantity of paddy in the midst of a group of aged men, some of whom play the part of the bull in ploughing, some devour the seeds like birds, and others perform various other relevant parts.

The Mashân Dance, the Dance of the Corpse.

On the third day, before sunrise, the Mashân (lit. a cemetery, hence its tutelary deity, the Mashân Kâlî) dance takes place, and in the early morning of this day is held the Corpse Dance. On the previous day, or two or three days before, the Hâdi (a scavenger, or a man of a very low order) fetches a corpse from some place, and "awakens" (i.e. instils life without the visible signs) it, after going through various rites and purifying it with incantations; and then places it in a tank, or ties it to the higher branches of a tree near it. At the time of the Mashân dance, he decorates this "awakened" corpse with wreaths and vermilion, ties a cord round its waist, and then with it enters the Gambhîrâ-mandapa, uttering various incantations. This part of the festivities is extinct nowadays. Another peculiar ceremony is observed here, in "the descent of the Pântâ on the Bhaktas," i.e. when they become possessed by the tute-

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lary deity of the village. The man who is thus possessed strives to strike terror into the hearts of the spectators by uttering terrible shrieks and making strange gestures.

Section II.—Sâhiyâtrâ.

The Sâhiyâtrâ.

The Sâhiyâtrâ is observed over the whole of Orissa, to the great delight of the populace.

In the month of April spring adorns the almost dead trees with green foliage and lively blossoms, and the whole of Orissa seems to be rejuvenated with the round of merry-makings and festivities. The day of the full moon is the best time for the celebration of these festivities which generally cover three days, and are performed with dance, song, music, etc.

One cannot say positively what the real name of the presiding deity of the Sâhiyâtrâ festivities is. Even in Orissa there are differences of opinion on this point. All that can be said with any degree of precision is that either Shiva, Shakti or Dharma is the god. This difficulty is due to the fact that in the temple where the Sâhiyâtrâ is held there is no image of any god, but only a ghata (pitcher of water) as representative of the presiding deity. In many villages, however, the festivities are held before the image of a goddess possessing one of the many forms that Shakti assumed.

The Sâhiyâtrâ festivities.

Music, song and dance form an integral part of these festivities, and these are performed by the populace putting on masks of gods, goddesses and many lower animals.

As in the Gâjan and Gambhîrâ festivities of other places, in these also there is the practice of enlisting Bhaktas. They are the principal organizers of these festivities, and they also observe the custom of Vânafodâ (hook-piercing), the salutation service, etc.

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Among the several forms of dancing may be mentioned the Chait Ghodâ (lit. the horse that is ridden in the month of Chaitra, i.e. March-April). The Bhaktas decorate their bodies with vermilion and then, standing on two sticks (or hobby-horse), dance with various gestures. This Chait Ghodâ dance can also be performed in a different way. The dancer hides himself inside a horse made of bamboo rods and covered with cloth, and makes the horse dance. Besides this, mask-dances of a he-sparrow and a she-sparrow (performed by washer-men), Vudâ Vudî (an old man and his old wife), Râvaṇa, Hanumân, Kâlî, etc., are also performed.

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CHAPTER VI.

POPULAR BUDDHISM IN HINDU BENGAL.[1]

The Gajan of Dharma.

THE Gajan festivities of Dharma are observed in Western Bengal. Although reputed to be a very ancient treatise regarding the method of the worship of Dharma, the *Shunya Purana* is not the original treatise on the subject. It is simply a partial collection of the songs and hymns embodied in the *Dharmapuja*, the original code of rules and regulations concerning this worship being quite different from this. The treatise on the worship of Dharma found at Vijayapur in Burdwan contains a fairly comprehensive account of the worship and festivities that are held in connexion with the Gajan of Dharma. The method of offering worship and holding festivities, as described in this work, is known as the Lauseni method. From this *Dharmapuja* code, explained to us by experts on the subject, we reproduce the following account of the methods in which the worship and festivities in connexion with the Gajan of Dharma are held.

The Chief or Presiding God in the Gajan of Dharma.

Dharma, or Dharma Niranjana, as he is otherwise called, is the presiding deity of these festivities. He

[1] See Sen's *History of Bengali Language and Literature* as well as H. P. Sastri's contributions (J.A.S.B., 1894, 1895), and Introduction to Vasu's *Modern Buddhism*.

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is the Âdi (Primitive) Buddha, who is not infrequently to be found identified with some of the Vedic and Puranic gods and goddesses. In some places, however, he is said to be different from and begotten of Âdi Buddha.

Lord Dharma.

According to the *Dharma-gîtâ*[1] of Mâhâdeva Das, Dharma is like the son of Adi Buddha. The Dharma worshippers of West Bengal sing their hymn in honour of the creative gods.

"Who is there in these three worlds [heaven, earth and the nether regions] that knows thee, who art Buddha the protector of the meek and the poor?

"Thou hast no beginning or end, O Lord, and, having travelled over the whole universe, no one has ever seen thy hands or feet or body.

"Thou hast neither form nor attributes. Who is there that has ever seen through or gauged thy illusive powers?"

Dharma has been shown as sitting with his face towards Adi Buddha. Then it is said :—

"O! how many crores[2] of ages did elapse in this state! [i.e. sitting on this seat with his face towards Adi Buddha]. Hear me, I am going to tell you how Dharma was born thereafter. After Mahâprabhu [Lord of Lords] had destroyed the sins one by one, the glorious face of Dharma emanated from him" (*Dharma-gita*).

We have it here that Mahaprabhu Adi Buddha revealed the glorious face of Dharma. Now, how did this Mahaprabhu look himself? And we are told :—

"Whose graceful body is made of Shunya, and who

[1] *Mayurbhanj Archæological Survey*, by Nagendranâth Vasu, Introd.

[2] 10 millions = 1 crore.

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is without any appetite or desire; who has no form and who is absolutely indescribable and undefinable."

His form is "Shunya". In the *Dharmapujâ-paddhati* Dharma has been described in the eight-stanza hymn composed by Chintâmani thus:—

"I make my obeisance to the spotless [Niranjana] Dharma, who is subtle, made up of the Shunya and is himself the Shunya[1] [the void], who is invisible [even] to the gods, who is above attributes, who is approachable [only] through meditation, and who is eternal."

Dharma's Second Form, as Niranjana.

Throughout the whole of West Bengal, "Dharma Niranjana" is a compound name for one and the same god; but *Dharma-gita* has shown Niranjana as separate from Dharma. Thus we have:—

"Yuga was greatly afraid to undertake the task of creating the world, and accordingly produced out of his body a son, named Niranjana, and said to him: 'Go you, immediately, Niranjana, and come back to me after you have created the world'. Having thus been directed by his father, Niranjana [obediently] went away but was highly afraid to create the world."

In the above extract the son of Âdi Buddha has been described as Niranjana.

The Presiding Goddess in the Gâjan of Dharma, Goddess Adya.[2]

In the Gâjan, goddess Adyâ receives worship with Dharma Niranjana. She sprang out of the body of Dharma, as we have in the *Mangala Chandî* of Manik Datta.

[1] This doctrine, so popular in mediæval Buddhism, can be traced back to the first century A.D. (J.R.A.S., London, 1914—Vidhusekhara Sâstri's communication).

[2] Accounts of Adya are also to be found in *Shunya Purana* and kindred works.

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"Begotten of his smile, Adya fell down on the ground. When she stood up, people beheld her with admiration."

In the *Dharma-gîtâ* of Mahâdeva Dâs of Orissa, it is said that a female figure sprang into existence from the sweat of Dharma's brow, engaged in the thought of creation.

"Having thus reflected within himself, Dharma sat down in extreme anxiety and trouble of mind, and perspiration flowed in streams from his body. He then wiped his forehead with his hand and shook off the drops of perspiration upon the ground, and immediately up sprang from there a female figure."

Two Different Forms of the Gajan.

There are two different forms of the Gâjan, viz. varṣika (annual) and Âvala.

(*a*) *The Annual Gâjan.*—On the third day of the light half of the month of Vaishakha (April-May), the installation of the ghata takes place and the festivities are brought to a close on the day of the full moon. This is observed in accordance with the injunctions of Râmâi Pandit and the *Hâkanda Purâṇa.*

(*b*) *The Avala Gajan.*—This can be held in any month of the year, and is held when, with a view to achieve success in an undertaking, the god Dharma is sought to be propitiated. The phonta of niyama (mark put on the forehead in recognition of a vow) is put on on a Friday.

The Daily Ceremony of Graha-bharana.

The Dharmapuja covers twelve days from the construction of the Dehars (altar) and the installation of

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the ghata to the offering of the final worship The worship in connexion with which the chief festivities are held is, however, over in four days. The list of the ceremonies that have to be observed each day is called Graha-bharaṇa by the Dharma priests.

The following is an extract from the treatise *Dharmapujâ-paddhati*:—

"The list of ceremonies, styled Graha-bharaṇa, was prepared by Râmâi Pandit, the chief priest of Dharma. Remembering the name of Dharma along with those of Ganapati [lit. lord of ghosts and goblins—a name of Ganesha, the conferrer of success] and Shrî Kâminya, and offering worship, attended with songs, music, etc., to the twelve Âdityas [sun-gods], I am going through the ceremonies of Kunda-sevâ [worshipping a pit of sacrificial fire], Hindolana [singing a peculiar air of the Hindu music, named Hindola], the five kinds of piercing, such as piercing the tongue, mana-graha, etc., adoption of the life of a Sannyâsi, the offering of goats as sacrifice, the reading of the *Chandikâ* [1] the offering of clarified butter, etc., into the sacred fire, attended with proper incantations; griha-darshana [looking inside a house to protect it from evil influences]; and the worship of the sun-god and other deities with the help of my spiritual preceptor and wise men versed in religious practices, with a view to absolve myself from the sin of uncleanliness due to the births and deaths of kinsmen. Thus pleasing my preceptor and the wise men, I hope to be able to realize my object.

The Dharma festivities are held at the present day after the Lâu-senî [2] custom, and the priests of the

[1] Reading of the *Chandikâ* does not mean here the reading of the *Mârkandeya Chandi*, but of the songs and hymns relating to the birth, marriage, etc., of the goddess Adyâ.

[2] See p. 38.

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Dharma-cult in Bengal also follow this custom in their worship, although the mantras (incantations) and hymns, etc., are those that were composed by Râmâi Pandit. The system of worship advocated in the *Hakanda Purana* has long become a dead letter. Although Râmâi Pandit has followed this authority in laying down most of his injunctions, yet by scholars of the Dharma cult he is also reputed to have instituted the practice of drawing the Dharmapadukâ (explained below).

The Several Parts of the Worship.

(1) Offering worship to the Sun-god and Samkalpa (i.e. a formal avowal of the object with which the worship is offered); (2) selection of the place of festivities, (3) construction of the Dehârâ (altar or temple), (4) drawing the Dharmapâdukâ (i.e. footprints of Dharma); (5) placing of Amina and Kaminya; (6) installation of and offering worship to the several attendants of Dharma; (7) abstinence from fish and meat, partaking of food consisting of ghee and boiled rice, or of food consisting of fruits only, and fasting; (8) the piercing ceremonies; (9) the marriage of Adyâ; (10) the breaking down of the Dehara; and (11) dance, song and music.

The Daily Worship.

The First Part.—This consists of plucking flowers, making paste of sandalwood, phontâ shuddhi (purifying the mark), tikâ-dâna (putting a sacred mark), purifying waters, and purifying the seat.

The Second Part.—The ceremonies in connexion with the awaking of Dharma from sleep, bathing, worship, manui (or offering of cooked rice, etc., as food to a deity), Dharma's retirement to rest,

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The Ceremonies of the Last Three Days.

There are some additional rules for regulating the worship of the thirteenth, the fourteenth and the fifteenth days of the bright half of the month. In the morning of each of the three days is held a peculiar festivity known as Âmani Chiyana. Besides this, it is also enjoined that the four doors of the temple should be kept especially neat and clean on these days, and the festivities of rousing Dharma from sleep, etc, should be held and worship offered to the deity. The ceremonies of Jihvâ Vâṇa (piercing the tongue with a long needle), of Kapâla Vâṇa (piercing the forehead with the same instrument), of Shalebhara (lying down on the ends of pointed needles), etc., and of the Pashchima Udaya (lit. rising in the West) are also observed on these occasions.

Last Day —Marriage of Adya. This is the concluding festivity and is a beautiful one. It is composed of several parts, such as Kâminya, Manui, etc. Next are observed the ceremonies of Crossing the Vaitaraṇi, and of offering water to the manes of Râma, called Râma tarpaṇa; and these are followed by the extremely delightful and historically interesting ceremony of Deharâ-bhanga (pulling down the Dehara).

The incantations with which this Dehara-bhanga is observed are divided into two parts, known as Chhota (lesser) Janani and Bada (greater) Janani (lit. the act of intimating, or proclamation).

The following extract is made from Chhota Jânâni, as described in *Dharmapuja-paddhati*:—

"The Khonakara is offering his prayers to the deity sitting with his face towards the West.

"Some worship Alla (God in Islam), some Ali, and others worship Mamuda Sain (Mohammed, the Prophet of Alla).

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"The crow is asking and Dharma is considering where Khodâ (God in Islam) was first born.

"They start for that place with Mother Mangala-Chandî.

"Goddess Kâlikâ went there and settled in the house of Châkanda. Coming forward, Vivi [a common designation of married Mohammedan women] Visadâ was crushing to powder long pepper, etc. [God] Jagannatha came there and sat down to see that nothing went wrong. He stole a quantity of spirituous liquor, and his hands were [consequently] cut off, etc."

The Images of Dharma and His Retinue.

God Dharma had no form. To represent him, however, the image of a tortoise is placed inside a small stone chariot amidst a very small heap of stones. On the occasion of the worship of Dharma, Dharmapada (i.e. footprints of Dharma) is drawn with sandal paste on the image of this tortoise. The Dharmapaduka (sandals of Dharma) is a modern form of this Dharmapada.

Dharma is worshipped under various names, such as Dharma Raja, Kâlu Raya, Bânkudâ Raya, Vudâ Râya, Kâlâchanda, Vriddhinâga, Khelârâma, Adiyâraja, Swarupa-nârâyaṇa, etc.

Gods and Goddesses worshipped with Dharma.—The Bhairavas (eight in number), Âvarṇa, Dâmara Shâin, Kâmadeva, Hanumân, Ulluka, Ksetrapâla, Mâtanga, Nilajihva, Ugradanta, Âmani, goddess Manasâ (mother of serpents), Mani, Bhâgini and Vâsuki (king of serpents).

The Meditation.

"Salutation to Dharma—salutation to Dharmarâja the formless, who has neither beginning, middle, nor

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end, who has neither hands nor feet, neither body nor voice, neither shape nor form, who is above fears and death and is subject neither to birth nor to decay, who is realizable through meditation only by Yogindra (i.e. Shiva) and dwells inside all creatures, and who is above all objects and desires, who is spotless (Niranjana), who confers boons on immortals and protects us, and whose form is the Void."—*Dharmapujâ-paddhati.*

The Salutation-Formula.

"I make my obeisance to Dharma, named also Kâlâchânda, etc, who is spotless, formless, of the form of the Void, and is the great god. Be pleased, O God of Gods, to save me!"

Hymn to Dharma.[1]

"Humbly do I offer this hymn to thee, after bowing low by rolling myself on the ground.

"Who is there in these three worlds that can know thee, who art Buddha, the protector of the meek and the poor?

"Travelling over the whole world, no one has ever found, O Formless Lord, thy beginning or end, thy hands or feet.

"Thou hast neither form nor figure, and thou art above all attributes. Who is there that can ever see, through or gauge thy illusive powers?

"Thou art not subject to birth, decrepitude or death, and thou art the great object of meditation of the Yogis.

"Salutation to Dharma, who is Shunya and whose form is Shunya."

[1] Found in the possession of a Dharma priest.

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A Hymn in Eight Stanzas[1] *to Niranjana.*

"Salutation to that Niranjana who is both Shiva and Brahmâ, who is confined to no particular place [i.e. who is omnipresent], who is above the sense of honour and dishonour, who has no feet, who is subtle, colourless and formless and absolutely undefinable, who is the observed of all observers and the essence of contentment, etc."—*Dharmapuja-paddhati.*

Astakas (poems consisting of eight stanzas)

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CHAPTER VII.

PHYSICAL AUSTERITIES PRACTISED BY THE PEOPLE.

Section I.—The Vanafoda.

Both in Gambhîrâ and Gâjan the Sannyâsis perform a ceremony under the name of the Vâṇafodâ. The word Vana (lit. an arrow) does not mean here the dart or arrow that goes off from the bow. Here it is quite a different thing, both in shape and use.

Of the several Vâṇas said to be in use in the Gâjan, the following three kinds are most generally noticed (1) the Kapâla Vâṇa; (2) the Trishula (trident) or Agni (fire) Vâna, also called Pârshwa (side) or Pasha Vâṇa, and (3) the Jihvâ (tongue) or Sarpa (snake) Vâna.

The different forms of Vânas

(1) *The Kapala (forehead) Vaṇa.*—It is short, being only a cubit in length; like the needle pointed at one end and blunt at the other, and is made of iron. To the sharp end is attached a small pipe with an open iron lamp on it.

How it is used.—The name Kapâla Vâṇa is due to the fact that it is stuck into the kapâla, or forehead. This is done at night. The Sannyâsi sits calm and still before the idol, and the blacksmith forces the Vâna below his skin between the eyebrows in such a way that it may stick out about two inches from the forehead. Then the face of the Sannyâsi is covered with a piece of new banana leaf, and the ends of it are drawn together

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and tied to the outer end of the Vâṇa. Thereafter a quantity of ghee (clarified butter) and a wick are put on the iron lamp, which with the detached pipe is then attached to the end of the Vâṇa, into the outermost extremity of which a Javâ (china rose) flower is also inserted. Another Sannyâsi then comes forward and lights the lamp attached to the Vâṇa.

(2) *The Trishula or Agni Vana.*—Made of iron and of the same shape as the Kapâla Vana, only half a cubit longer. It has, however, no separate pipe or lamp attached to it. When two such Vanas are joined together in a straight line, their joined ends are linked together by a device like a trident. Hence the name, Trishula (trident) Vana.

How it is used.—This ceremony is performed in the course of a procession that is formed in some places in the day and in others at night. The Vanas are stuck into the skin of the sides below the arms, the pointed outer extremities sticking out, making an angle before the breast of the performer. These ends are then joined together by means of a pipe to which the trident is attached. Then the performer raises the Vânas a little with his hands, but in such a way that the linked ends may not be detached. Now a piece of cloth is steeped in a quantity of ghee and wrapped round the trident and fire is set to it. The Sannyasi now begins to dance, and powdered resin is thrown now and then into the flame.

(3) *The Jihva or Snake Vana.*—Made of iron, as thick as the thumb, and six to nine cubits long. On the Shâle-bhara day of the Gajan festival, the Jihvâ-Vanasodâ is exhibited. One end of this Vâṇa is like the hood of a serpent, the other end is pointed, but the extremity is blunt. The tongue is pierced with it.

How it is used.—The Jihvâ is not inserted in the

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same way as the other Vânas. The tongue is first softened by rubbing it with ghee. Then the lower side of it is turned up by the blacksmith, and with a pointed iron nail known as Vela-kântâ (lit. a thorn of the marmelos tree) a side of this lower part is pierced. Thereafter, through the hole thus made, the pointed end of the Jihva Vâṇa is thrust till its middle portion is well inside the mouth. The ends of the Vâna have to be equally poised. The hooded one is besmeared with vermilion, and a fruit of some kind is stuck into it. The Sannyasi now holds either end of thê Vana with his hands and begins to dance, amidst flourishes of music. Many others repeat this feat. Sometimes they pass the Vâna through the tongue before the very eyes of the spectators, and dance, and are rewarded with money, clothes and ornaments.

General remarks.

Before use the Vanas have to be rubbed and cleansed, so that not a trace of rust is left on them. Then they are besmeared with ghee and worship is offered to them. The blacksmith now bathes, takes as blessing some flowers from those offered to the god, and sets about his task. The Vela-kantâ he brings from home with him. It has also to be worshipped and besmeared with ghee. That part of the body which has to be pierced has also to be rubbed with ghee. Then the blacksmith besmears this part and his own fingers with ashes of dried cow-dung (used as fuel) and thrusts the Vâna. When it is drawn out, he applies a quantity of cotton soaked in ghee to the affected part and holds it for some time between his fingers. When the Vaṇa is pulled out of the tongue, the mouth is filled with ghee, mixed in some places with powdered sesamum. The Sannyasi, whose tongue is thus pierced, is not allowed to talk with anybody for one whole day. Different parts of the tongue are pierced in different years.

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Piercing the Back with the Vâna.

Pristha Vânafodâ.

This ceremony was observed at the time of the Chadaka. In former times the back was pierced with one or two iron Vânas shaped like fishing-hooks. Cords were then passed through the outer ends of these hooks, and the Sannyasi, thus suspended, enjoyed swings on the Chadaka post.

The thick skin in the centre of the back, and on either side of the backbone, was pulled out, leaving the spinal cord alone, and the weapon named Velakântâ was made to run through it, and then through the hole thus made the hook was thrust. The skin is made ready for this operation by being rubbed with ghee and ashes of dried cow-dung.

Section II.—History of the Practice of Vanafoda.

The Mahabhârata and Harivamsha.

In the *Mahabhârata* we find that Bhisma lay for a considerable time on a bed of arrows before his death. This is not what is meant by Vânafodâ ; still, it may be taken to have furnished the original idea of this practice.

In *Harivamsha* there is the legend of King Vâna, who went, bathed in blood, with arrows stuck in his body, to the place of Shiva and danced before him.

In Dharma Samhitâ.

On the affair of secret love between Vâna's daughter Usa and Shri Krisna's son Aniruddha, a terrible war took place between the aggrieved fathers, in which King Vana of Shonitapura lost his arms, and blood trickled down his whole body, being wounded with darts. In this state he approached Shiva and danced before him, till the god was pleased to make him hale and hearty and immortal, and also to direct at the request of Vâna that any sincere and earnest votary who would thus dance before him in future would be blessed with sons.

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It was this legend of Vâna, in *Dharma Samhita* more particularly the belief that Shiva had been pleased to direct that any sincere and earnest votary who would fast and thus dance before him would be blessed with issue, that gave rise to the practice of Vânafodâ. As a means of purchasing the favour of Shiva, the Sannyâsis allow their bodies to be thus pierced, and this is why they thus dance before his image. Apparently the name of Vânafodâ was given to the practice after King Vâna, who was its originator. In the Gâjan blood has to be spilt in one way or other; and this is known as Vânafodâ.

From the legend of King Vâna originated the practice of Vânafodâ.

In the *Samhitâs* we find that provision has been made for worshipping Vânas in the course of the worship that is offered to Shiva. Thus it is laid down: "While worshipping Shiva, worship should also be offered to the glorious trident in the north-east, the thunderbolt in the east, the axe in the south-east, the arrow in the south, the sword in the south-west, the noose in the west, the driving-hook (for elephants) in the north-west, and the bow (or the trident) in the north".

The Samhitas and the worship of Vânas.

The story of Harishchandra's worshipping Dharma, as told by Râmâi, reminds one of the legend of Vâṇa. The following lines are quoted from his *Shunya Purana*:—

The Shunya Purâṇâ of Râmâi.

"A saw was applied to the head of Râma, but it could not make even the faintest impression, as the Master was with him" ("Yama Puraṇa," 10).

"There stood Chandra, the prefect of police, with the sword of Chandra Hasa in his hand" ("Message brought by the Messenger of Yama," 4).

"Suryya, the prefect of police, stood with the weapons of Sena and Dakvusa" (*ibid.*, 10).

"Garuda, the prefect of police, stood up with the

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weapons of Jhati [broomstick?] and Jhagadâ" (*ibid.*, 10).

"Ulluka, the prefect of police, stood up with the Jivanâsa [life-destroying] Chuda in his hand" (*ibid.*, 16).

Dharmapuja-paddhati.

The treatise *Dharmapuja-paddhati* (on the system of worshipping Dharma) is said to have been composed by Râmâi Pandit. The practice of Vânafoda has been recognized by him. In the chapter of "Graha-bharana" we are told of the processes of Kunda-seva, Hindolana, Jihvâ-vedana and Pancha-vedana.

Vaṇafoda in modern times.

The performance of Vâṇafodâ is even now exhibited in the Gâjan and the Gambhîrâ festivities. The piercing of the tongue, and also of the back, on the occasion of the Chadaka festival, are not, however, included in the programme of our days; only feats with small Kapâla Vânas and Trishula Vaṇas are performed. The body is nowadays pierced in many places with the thorns of the marmelos tree, the outer ends of these being decorated with china roses. This seems to be a refined edition of Vânafodâ.

Training in militarism.

The Vâṇafodâ is an heroic practice. In the modern Gambhîrâ and Gâjan festivities the Bhaktas dance with scimitars, spears, etc. The sect of Kutichaka followers of Shiva still wield the spade and the scimitar as their badges. The Naga (lit. naked) Sannyasis of the Shaiva cult also use the spade and the scimitar.

To encourage the development of chivalrous ideas in society, the Vâṇafoda was introduced and cultivated probably as a semi-military feat. The class of men from whom these Sannyasis were recruited furnished the Hindu Zamindars (landlords) of yore with their infantry, and it was they who were occasionally found to commit dacoities in the land

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CHAPTER VIII.

FOLK-DANCES IN RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS.

Section I.—The Mask (Mukha).

Masks made to represent Gods or Ghosts.

Masks are made and used to represent Kâlikâ (i.e. Kâli), Châmundâ (another name of Chandi), Narasimha (lit. man-lion this name was applied to that incarnation of God in which he killed the demon Hiranya-kashipu, after assuming a body, the upper half of which was like that of a lion and the nether half human), Vâsuli, Râma and Laksmana, Hanuman, an old man and his old consort, Shiva, and others. Mask-dances also representing ghosts and goblins, or Kârtika (War-God), a lame man, or the Chali (the background of an image), are seen to take place. The mask is made of wood or earth; in olden days, however, the former alone was exclusively used. Among these, again, those made of the neem wood (a tree the bark and leaves of which are extremely bitter to the taste, *azadirachta indica*) were given the first place.

All carpenters cannot carve these masks, for they have to be made in accordance with the descriptions of the gods and goddesses whom they are made to represent. The rules are laid down in the treatises on arts and crafts called *Shilpa-Shastras*. After the carpenters have done, the patuâ, i.e. the painter, applies his brush to them, and thus makes them ready for use. Besides these, earthen masks, variously coloured, are also offered for sale by expert potters. Head-gears for these wooden

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and earthen masks are made by mâlâkaras, i.e. makers of artificial flowers and garlands.

Before the Bhakta puts on a new mask of wood, he will place it before the priest in the Gambhira for its prana-pratisthâ (the religious rite that is supposed to bring life into an image). Those who have masks in their possession have to worship them duly on the Vijayâ-dashami day (i.e. the fourth day of the Durgâ-puja, held generally in October), although this practice has for some time been fast dying out. Many old masks are seen hung in the Gambhirâ house. People believe that some of these masks are jâgrata (lit. awake, hence endued with life and able to smile or frown) and that the tutelary deities of some are extremely wrathful. It is reported that some mask-dancers somehow or other incurred the displeasure of the gods or goddesses they meant to represent and in consequence lost their lives. Those who in olden times danced with the masks of deities, especially of Kâli, Châmunda, Narasimha and Vâsuh, took special care to do no such thing as might bring down on them the displeasure of their gods. Before they put on these masks for dancing, they gave up the use of oil and the eating of fish and meat, tried to make their hearts clean of all impious thoughts and ideas, and dressed and decorated themselves with pure clothes and ornaments.

The art of putting on the Mask.

Near the upper extremity of the mask and on its inner side, just above the forehead of the wearer, there is one hole, and behind its ears there are two others, through which strings or cords are passed and the mask made fast to the face. A piece of cloth is wrapped over the head, covering the ears, in the manner of a turban, to protect the face from being scratched by friction with the mask.

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Section II.—The Dance

The horse of the horse-dance is made of a bamboo frame overlaid with paper. On its back, at the place where the saddle is put, there is a large hole. The rider thrusts himself up to the waist into this hole, places across his shoulders the cords that are tied to the two upper sides of the hobby-horse and then commences his dancing. The peacock-dance of Kartika is similarly performed. The bear-dance is also occasionally met with. In this case the dancer puts on the mask of a bear and has his whole body covered with hair made of dark-coloured jute or hemp fibres, and is then made by another to dance in the manner of a bear. Like the image of Durgâ, its background (Chañ) is also nicely decorated. The selected Bhakta fastens it to the front-side of his waist, and, seating little children on it, causes them to dance with his two hands from behind. In the dance of the Kâlî mask, the dancer is occasionally seen to have four hands. All these, however, are of wood, the dancer's own being tied together behind his back. The dancer in the Châmundâ mask-dance wields in one hand a kharpara (the upper part of the human skull) to receive the blood of her victims and in the other a pigeon and such other things. In the Hanumân mask-dance, it is the chief votary that plays this part. He puts on the mask of, and dresses himself like, Hanumân, the great monkey-general, and then exhibits the crossing of the sea and the burning down of Lamkâ (these were among the most important feats performed by Hanumân as described in the *Ramâyaṇa*). The dance of Shiva-Parvati is performed in a gentle manner. Under her armpit and encircled by her left hand, Pârvati wields a pitcher filled with water, and over its mouth are placed some fresh mango-twigs (*mangifera indica*). In her

The Horse Dance; the Kâlî Mask Dance; the Old Man and his Old Wife.

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right hand she holds a full-blown lotus. The dance of Vudâ-Vudı (old man and his old consort) has a comic element in it.

The Narasimha Dance.

Several dances do not require any particular observation on them. The Narasimha dance and its mask cannot however be passed over without remark. We have seen that the dance in the Gambhîra Mandapa is performed solely by representatives of Shiva, Shakti (Parvatî) and their ghost and goblin retinue. This has been the practice from time immemorial and is also in keeping with the injunctions in the *Puranas* on the point. There is no reason anywhere for the introduction of the Narasimha dance into these festivities, Narasimha being another name of Visnu and thus popularly quite different from Shiva. The reason for this introduction may be found in the following. Among the several forms that Chandı is said to have assumed, we find one described as that of Narasimhî. As she is popularly regarded as the wife of Shiva, it may be that the devotees felt inclined also to introduce her before her Lord in the Gambhirâ ; and in course of time her name came to be shorn of the final *ı*, sign of the feminine, the dance thus coming to be known as the Narasimha dance.

We reproduce below the Dhyâna (set form of meditation) and the praṇama (set form of salutation) of the goddess Narasimhı.

Meditation on Narasimhı

"Om [symbol of the Hindu triad, being a contracted but joint name for Brahmâ, the God of Creation, Visnu, the God of Protection, and Maheshwara, the God of Destruction. Generally it introduces meditation and salutation hymns], [the object of my meditation is] dressed like a goddess, [is] of a very powerful build [or it may mean, *forcibly brought out*, referring to the

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crystal column from inside which she rushed out when the demon Hiranya-kashipu kicked against it], [is] decorated with various ornaments, [is] engaged in rending the breast of Kashipu [i.e. Hiranya-kashipu, who disbelieved her existence, and, in support of his contention, said that if she was omnipresent she must be in yonder crystal column. Then he kicked at it, and, lo and behold there stood before him the awful goddess as described above] and known as Narasimhi."

Salutation to Narasimhi.

"Om, I bow to the goddess who has assumed the form of Narasimha and humbled the pride of giants and demons, is the bestower of good, is of a glorious hue, is eternal and is called Narasimhi."

From this it seems that the dance should be named after Narasimhi instead of Narasimha.

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CHAPTER IX.

SOCIALIZATION AND SECULARIZATION OF HINDU LIFE.

THE cheapest and most superficial view of Hindu civilization is that it is absolutely non-secular and ultra-spiritual. An excessive dose of pessimistic religiosity and an utter disregard of material interests are glibly talked of as the characteristic features of the Hindus. This interpretation of Hindu temperament is, however, not at all borne out by facts of history. It is strange that the Hindus should have been regarded so long as a purely non-political and non-economic or even a pre-political and pre-economic race in spite of the thousand and one evidences of a rich secular and material life furnished by architectural, sculptural, numismatic and literary records. It is unfortunate that sufficient attention has not been drawn to the study of palaces, temples, forts, irrigation works, tanks, roads, etc., that testify to the engineering skill of the Indians in ancient and mediæval times; for that alone is sufficient to dispel the erroneous theory about the genius of the civilization that has grown on Indian soil. Or, again, the idea that one gets from a study of the *Nîti-Shâstras*, *Shilpa-Shastras*, *Vastu-Shastras*, *Kâma-Shastras*, and other treatises on polity, warfare, town-planning, administrative machinery and financial management, arts and crafts, sex, hygiene, sanitation, eugenics, etc., is sure to convince the most critical student of history that the Hindus had their *forte* not only in transcen-

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dental and metaphysical speculations, but also in the management of the affairs of this earthly earth, the administration of secular interests and the supply of the necessaries, comforts and luxuries of life.

It is the object of this chapter to give a historical account of one or two entertainments and amusements that are prominent features of Hindu social existence and make life in India thoroughly communal and collective as opposed to merely individualistic and exclusive. The evidences are certainly not exhaustive, but will, at any rate, indicate the great zest that the Hindus have ever felt in enjoying secular life and making it sweet, socialized and comfortable, and undoubtedly prove that pessimism is not the stuff out of which the Indian mind is made.

The subject is being treated under three heads processions, musical performances, and social gatherings. It would be interesting to note that these features of modern life have each a long history behind them, and that as in many other things, India is the hoary birthplace of various social conventions and institutions. So that Indian literature and history require to be studied more "intensively" and elaborately by moderns not solely in the interest of comparative mythology and philology, but also of Comparative Social Art, i.e. the comparative study of social festivities and enjoyments, pastimes, merry-makings and at-homes. In fact the scientific study of social man has to be centred more and more on India.

Section I.—Processions.

By "processions" we mean the train of persons that proceeds through a town or village, as the case may be, on the occasion of a festival with flourishes of music, flags and buntings, elephants and horses, etc.

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The Vedic Age.—Processions do not seem to have been common in the Vedic age. We do, however, hear of a procession that was formed in connexion with the ceremony of Avabhritha bath winding up a sacrificial performance.

The Râmâyaṇa and the Mahâbhârata.—Processions are mentioned in the *Ramayana.* In connexion with the installation of kings, marriages, etc., these were formed at Ayodhyâ. In the *Mahâbhârata* also we come across processions in many places. Very often the kings made arrangements for these to signalize their sacrifices, marriages, and conquests. An account is given of a huge procession that was formed in connexion with the bath that concluded the celebrated Ashwamedha sacrifice of Yudhisthira. We are also told of another, and a very good one, that was formed on the occasion of the worship of Brahmâ.

The Harivamsha.—A procession is said to have marched out on the occasion of the festivities that Shri Krisna held at the town of Dwârâvatī. Another was formed when he and others, bound for the shrine of Pindâraka, went to the shores of the sea, stepped into a vessel decorated with flags and streamers waiting for the purpose, finished their ablutions and took their meals there.

The Bhagavata.—In the *Bhagavata* processions are said to have been generally formed in connexion with marriages, etc. We are also told of one that was formed on a small scale in the house of Nanda on the occasion of the nativity of Shri Krisna.

Visnu Purana.—A procession marched out on the occasion of the Bow sacrifice performed by King Kamsa. On festive occasions also these are said to have been formed.

Shiva Purâṇa.—There is scope for processions in

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connexion with the installation of the image and worship of Shiva. In the *Skanda* and *Padma Puranas* accounts are given of the Skandagovinda festival and a procession that was started in connexion with this.

Dharma, Jnana, Sanatkumara and Vayavia Samhitas.—On the occasion of the installation of the image of Shiva and the festivities that were held in his honour, the passing of sleepless nights and the starting of processions are recorded. It is also said that a procession marched out with the image of Shiva on the occasion of the Flowery Car festival and the swinging ceremony. Provisions have also been made for holding processions on the occasion of the great festival of Shiva to be held in the month of Phâlgoon (February-March), of the swinging festival to be held in the month of Chaitra (March-April), and of the Puspa-mahalaya (Flowery Temple) to be held in Vaishakha (April-May) next.

The Puranas of the Jainas.—In the *Padma Purana* it is said that on the occasion of the natal festivities of Risabha Deva, the Hindu gods came down, showered flowers and released his father from confinement. We are further told that a procession marched out on the occasion, making gifts of money, etc., while passing. On the ninth day of the dark half of the month of Chaitra the birthday festivities of the Adi (First) Jina Risabha are held. Processions were also formed in connexion with the festivities that were held to celebrate the births and attainment of emancipation of the Jaina Tirthamkaras.

We learn from *Aristanemi Purana* that a procession was started in connexion with the Jaina spring festival celebrated by King Sumukha. It is also found that a procession accompanied him when Vâsudeva went with

[1] See Stevenson's *Heart of Jainism* (Oxford, 1915), pp. 22, 45, 51, etc.

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Gandharva Sena to the place of the Phâlgoon festivities with a view to rendering his homage to Parshwanatha.

We are told in the *Muni Suvrata Purana* that on a certain occasion Rama and Laksmana with some ladies celebrated the spring festival in the garden of Chitrakuta at Benares. An account is to be found also of a procession that was formed on the occasion. Then again we come across the description of two other processions that were formed in connexion with the imposing ceremonies of the Jina worship performed on the 2nd day of the light half of the month of Kartika (October-November) and also with the worship of Jina Deva by Rama.

Buddhist books.—In the various Buddhist works we become acquainted with the pomp and grandeur with which processions were formed and marched out.

Shakyasimha (Buddha) was born on a full-moon day in the forest of Lumvini. Festivities were held in the town for a week from the birthday. When on the death of his mother he was brought into the capital from the forest of Lumvini, great festivities are said to have been held and grand processions to have been formed to signalize the occasion. If the glorious descriptions of these be not hyperbolical, it must be said that the great festivities and processions held by the later Buddhist Emperors were by far less grand and ceremonious than those described in *Lalita Vistara.*

It says: "Five thousand well-dressed men with pitchers full of water will lead the van, followed by as many girls of the zenana, holding aloft in their hands fans of the peacock tail, to be followed in their turn by girls holding fans of the palm-leaf. They will be accompanied by other girls with golden vases filled with fragrant waters in their hands. The public roads will have to be sprinkled with water. Five thousand girls will hold flags followed by as many decorated with

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variegated flowing garlands and by five hundred Brâhmanas proceeding with ringing bells. The Prince will be followed by twenty thousand elephants, twenty thousand horses, eighty thousand chariots and forty thousand armed infantry."

This was the first birthday festival of Buddha with procession. Festivities were also held with procession on the occasion of the cremation of his body after death. On the full-moon day of Vaishakha (April-May) a great Buddhist festival is celebrated with procession, because it was on this day that Buddha was born as well as attained his pari-nirvana (i.e. final emancipation) or death.

A Buddhist procession of 400 A.D.—From the record left by the Chinese traveller, Fa Hien, of Indian festivities about 400 A.D., we get some account of a Buddhist procession. It was in the reign of Chandra Gupta II, Vikramaditya, that this traveller visited India. He witnessed a huge procession at Pâtaliputra (modern Patna) on the occasion of the Buddhist car-festival.

Hiuen-Thsang's description (643 A.D.). — Hiuen-Thsang, the Chinese traveller, witnessed a grand procession at Kanauj during the reign of Emperor Harsa Vardhana, in connexion with a great Buddhist festival that was then solemnized to commemorate the ablution ceremony of Buddha. This is known as Chaitrotsava (festival to be held in the month of Chaitra or March-April). The Emperor himself carried on his shoulders a small image of Buddha to the Ganges to give it a plunge there, and after this was done, returned to the pavilion for festivities. A procession consisting of twenty kings and three hundred elephants marched round the city following the image to the river and back from it.

The Shunya Purana and the Dharmapuja-paddhati of Ramai Pandit.—Râmâi Pandit is said to have lived at Gauda in the tweifth century (?). Provision

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was made for a procession in the arrangement that he made for performing the worship of Dharma and holding festivities in his honour. It was laid down that on the occasion of the Gâjan of Dharma the organizers should go round the city on a horse named Mâdhâi and the chariot of Dharma. This is how the procession of those days was formed.

In Dharma-Mangala.—In all the editions of *Dharma-Mangala* that have come to light, mention is made of processions in connexion with great festivities.

"In Usatpur Sukha Datta of the Vârui (betel plant-grower) family is engaged in the worship of Dharma with heart and soul. Placing Dharma Padukâ (sandals) in a gold palanquin he carried it on his head and thus brought Gâjan to the circle of Mayanâ."

Ghanarâma has referred to the practice of marching out processions of Dharma from village to village.

In the Gajan of Shiva.—In Radha (western districts of Bengal) the Sannyasis in honour of Shiva's Gâjan or festival dress themselves in various ways and travel from village to village with rejoicings, placing the phallus of Shiva on a copper plate and carrying it in some places on the head and in some others in palanquins.

It is clear that the custom of forming processions on festive occasions has come down from very early times and has been observed by all denominations, Vedist, Purâṇist, Shaiva, Vaisnava, Jaina and Buddhist. It was not only in connexion with the worship of gods, but on all auspicious occasions that the people are found to have indulged in this luxury. Processions are even now seen in connexion with the ceremonies of marriage, the first tonsure, the investiture with the sacred thread, etc. In Bengal the ceremony of consigning the image of Durga to the waters is attended with

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a procession. Along with this may be mentioned the Bharatmilap processions of the Punjab, Ramalila processions of the U.P., and the Ganapati processions among the Marathas. The custom of forming similar processions is to be met with among the daily and casual observances of life. Going round and through the town or village in a body, singing the glories of Hari (Krisna), is also a kind of procession.

Section II.—Music and Dance.

The performances of dance and music have been in vogue on all festive occasions since the Vedic age, and point to the collective group-life that the people of Hindustan have ever lived.

In the Rig Veda.—In the *Rig Veda* Vishwamitra's son Madhuchchhandâ Risi has added to the grandeur of sacrifices by making dance and music inseparably connected with them. Thus he says: "O Shatakratu, singers sing in your honour; worshippers offer their homage to worshipful Indra (i.e. you). Like bamboo-pieces raised aloft by dancers, you are raised high (i.e. your glories are magnified) by your panegyrists." In another place of this scripture we find that the Karkari and the Vinâ (something like the lyre) were the favourite musical instruments.

In the Ramayana, the Mahâbhârata and the Puranas.—In the *Puranas* dance and music were largely introduced, and these were best performed by kinnaras (celestial musicians having human bodies with heads of horses) and their wives, the kinnaris. Musical instruments of various kinds were invented and dance and music were among the best accomplishments of princesses, who were one and all taught these fine arts.

[1] The *Rig Veda*, Astaka 1, Chap. I, Sukta 10, 1.

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In the *Mahabharata* we find that when in disguise, Arjuna took to a musician's profession and taught music and dance to the princess of Virâta. In the Râjasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira, also, dance and music were provided on a lavish scale. Not to speak of the place of festivities, even the courts and bed-chambers of princes resounded with their sounds.

In Harivamsha.—In the pleasant boat-trip that was taken to the shrine of Pindâraka, the ladies and gentlemen of the Yadu family indulged themselves freely in dance and music. The particular mode of music known as Chhâlikya was invented at this time by an Apsara (a celestial nymph devoted to dance and music) named Pancha-chuda, who defeated the accomplished celestial singer Nârada the sage in a competition of music. Every *Purana*, every *Upa-Purana*, every *Samhita*, teems with instances of the prevalence of these fine arts. The people of those days freely encouraged their cultivation.

In Dharma Samhitâ.—In *Dharma Samhita* we find an account of the musical entertainment attended with dance that was given to Shiva.

"All the false mothers (sixteen goddesses such as Gauri, Padma, etc.) entertained Rudra with dance and song—some danced, some sang, some laughed, and others amused him amorously."

From this we learn that all the disguised mothers danced and sang round Shiva. King Vâna himself treated Shiva with various dances to the accompaniment of music. We read of diverse gestures and noddings of the head exhibited on this occasion.

Jnana Samhitâ.—Reference to dance and music is also to be found in *Jnana Samhitâ.*

"Inspired by the sentiment of devotion the wise perform worship with dance and music in the first part of

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the night, and then apply themselves to the repetition of their respective mantras (incantations invoking the appearance of the gods they worship)."

"Dance and music have again to be performed till the rising of the sun."

These injunctions go to prove that dance and music were much too indulged in in the worship of Shiva. Hence it is that he has got the name of Nritya-priya (fond of dance) and Nata-raja (prince of dance).

In the Jaina Puranas.—References to dance and music are also to be met with in the Jaina *Puranas*. In the legend of Risabha Deva in Jaina *Harivamsha*, otherwise called *Aristanemi Purana*, we are told of a dance performance. Risabha Deva lost all zest for the worldly life at the sight of the dance performed by Nilânjasâ, one of the female dancers in the service of Indra, the king of gods.

In Muni-Suvrata Purana.—When the Jaina sage Suvrata took his birth among men, he was sprinkled with holy water, and on this occasion Indra and the other gods sang hymns to him. The spring festivals celebrated by kings were also accompanied with dance and music.

In Buddhist Books.—*Lalita Vistara* says that five hundred Brâhmanas who joined in the procession that was formed on the occasion of the birthday festival of Shakyasimha, were engaged in ringing bells.

Blind Kunâla with his wife "managed to penetrate into an inner court of the palace where he lifted up his voice and wept, and to the sound of a lute, sang a song full of sadness".—*Asoka*, by Smith.

In the record of his travels left by Fa Hien.—In the days of the Gupta Kings dance and music were extensively cultivated. Bright pictures of the cultivation of these arts are to be found in the dramas of the time.

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On the 8th day of Jyaiṣtha (May-June) Fa Hien witnessed the Buddhist car-festival at Pâtaliputra. He says that to the image of Buddha seated on the car, flowers and other fragrant things were offered to the accompaniment of dance, song and music. Gloriously the cars marched with flourishes of music, and in a serial order, to the place of festivities which were held throughout the night with dance, song and music.

In the account left by Hiuen-Thsang.—The Chinese traveller Hiuen-Thsang visited India, as we have seen, when Harsa Vardhana was on the throne. Dance and music were lavishly provided in the temporary pavilion that was erected for the great festival which he witnessed at Kanauj and also in the procession that marched through the city on the occasion. Every day the festivities were held with dance and music.

Among the injunctions of Buddhism.—The ringing of bells, the singing of religious songs, etc., are among the inviolable duties of the Buddhist.

In the Shunya Purana of Ramai.—In the course of the worship of Dharma, all the themes of Ramai's *Shunya Purâña* had to be sung in connexion with the celebration of the ceremonies. It is said that these were sung in the Mangala and the Ravari modes of music. They were interspersed also with incantations necessary for worshipping Dharma. At the time of this worship the male and female Sannyasis sang to the accompaniment of dance and the musicians played on their instruments. Thus :—

"With offerings of flowers the songs of Râmai were sung."

"Putting on a copper ring, the dancer sings songs throughout the livelong night."

"With various merry dances, music and songs the worship of Dharma charms the whole world."

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"Singing songs through his horn, keeping time with the damaru (a small drum), Shiva is meditating on Dharma and striking up a vocal music by playing on his blown-up cheeks with his fingers."

"Some are selling, some are buying, and some are enjoying dance and music."

Such accounts of dance and music are to be found in *Shunya Purâṇa.*

In the worship of Dharma, while the ceremony of besmearing (the image) with an unguent of sandal powder, etc., is gone through, conch-shells are blown and the women utter the auspicious ulu ulu sound.

"All the dancers danced with flourishes of music to the great enjoyment (of the spectators)."

"Every day drums were beaten, conch-shells were blown, and bells rung to the satisfaction of all."

Horns were repeatedly blown, and a music was struck up with drums, trumpets, kettle-drums, dâmâmâ, khamaka and shimgâ.

The worship of Dharma was thus performed with dance, song, the sound of ulu and the blowings of conch-shells.

Govinda chandra Gîta, or Lays of Govinda chandra.—Poet Durlabha Mallik composed the songs collectively known as *Govinda chandra Gîta* (The Lays of Govinda chandra). This book was sung *in toto.* In Vaiṣṇava literature we read of the songs of Yogipâla, Mahipâla, Bhogipâla, and Gopipâla. The last had a wide circulation in the country.

In the Dharma-Mangala by Ghanarâma.—All the Dharma-Mangala works are books of song. For a week prior to the celebration of the Dharma-Pujâ the whole of one *Dharma-Mangala* was sung. Ample references are to be found in each of these works to the prevalence of dance and music. Châmaras (yak-tail

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fly brushes) were brandished and cymbals were played on while the Dharma-Mangalas were sung.

"On your way (or just go, and) see and hear dance and music in the gâjan of Dharma."—*Canto* IV, *Ghanarâma.*

"How many poems (songs) are sung and how many musical instruments are played on in the Gâjan of Âdyâ."

"It was all the reign of music struck up with long and small drums, horns and Kâdâ (drum beaten at one end)."—*Canto* III, *ibid.*

"With great pleasure they went through the service of making salutations and passed a sleepless night with dance, song and music, meditation and worship."—*Canto* V, *ibid.*

"They danced and sang with up-lifted arms."—*Canto* V, *ibid.*

"Beating a couple of flat drums (beaten at one end only), blowing a horn and flying a royal flag (he) quickly went past Gauda."—*Canto* XIV, *ibid.*

"Singers and musicians are the principal items of the Gâjan. Hari and Hara be pleased to come and listen to the flourish of music in honour of Âdyâ."—*Dharma-Pujâ by Gaudeshwara.*

"In the morning and evening and at noon (i.e. throughout the day), with endless song and music the king worshipped Dharma with absorbed mind."—*Dharma-Pujâ by Gaudeshwara.*

In the Dharma-Mangala by Mânik Gânguli.—"Music is struck up with dhâkas and dholas (long drums), sânâi (pipe) and kânsi (an instrument of bell-metal), conch-shells and bells, lyres and flutes, kâdâ and pootâ, turis (bugle) and veris (kettle-drum)."

Mangala-Chandî by Kavikamkana and Mânik Datta.—*Mangala-Chandî* is another book of songs.

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The worship of Mangala-Chandî has obtained in Bengal for a long time. She has been the guardian angel of Bengalee homes, and every householder installs a pitcher filled with water as her representative to which worship is offered on every auspicious occasion. The singing of her songs is indispensable, especially in marriages. Long before the birth of Chaitaṇya (1485-1533) these songs used to be sung in every house. The lays of Mangala-Chandî by Kavikamkana[1] (Mukundarâma) are held in special esteem in Râdha, just as the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta prevails in Gauda. The usual accompaniments of these songs are the châmara, the cymbal, the khola (a kind of drum) and the Tâṇapurâ (a stringed instrument used as an accompaniment in vocal music). These songs cannot be sung without a principal singer (leader), some seconds and a musician. While singing, the leader and his seconds play on cymbals and dance to the measures of the music.

Among the references to dance and music in Mânik Datta's *Chandî* we find :—

"Mânik Datta sang a new song.

"Be pleased, O Abhayâ, to stay in (my) house for eight days. For your amusement dance and music will be provided, your yantra (diagram representing the goddess) will be duly drawn and worshipped, and an outer garment will be offered to you." "I make over the songs to you that will require eight days to be sung. Go and be pleased to sing in my temple. I make Raghu and Râghava your seconds and also provide you with a Tâṇapurâ and a musician. Thus you are provided with a full party."

In the Lays of Viṣahari.—The songs in honour of

[1] *Vide* J. N. Das Gupta's *Mukundarâm : Bengal in the Sixteenth Century* (Calcutta University, 1916).

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Viṣahari or Manasâ are popularly known as the lays of Viṣahari or the *Bhâsâna of Manasâ*.[1] Like *Mangala Chandî* songs, these also were held in great esteem by the people of Bengal. Many writers employed their pen on the Bhâsâna of Manasâ. One Vipradâsa, of the village of Vatagrâma, composed the songs of Padmâ. Two old books on the songs of Manasâ are still extant in Malda under the names of *Tantravibhuti* and *Jagajjivana*. These songs were circulated among the people as charms against the ravages of snakes. Most of these songs are to be found in the legend of Chânda Sadâgara (trader) and Vehulâ.

The songs are sung with the khola and cymbals. The *Bhâsâna of Manasâ* is found to be sung by the actors representing the personnel of the story. All the different collections of the lays of Viṣahari are full of references to dances, songs and music.

A study of the history of dance and music in India shows that these have largely influenced the Hindus. They grow and develop very naturally in the genial atmosphere of societies. As soon as the human mind seeks relaxation, dance and music spring up, as they largely help in driving out the gloom and in dispersing the clouds that hover above the mind. Hence it is that they have been extensively used for communal ceremonies and festivities. They are also very powerful agents in the hands of the preachers of religion ; and in every age a new religious sect has sprung up and let loose the current of devotion over the people's mind by initiating festivities and songs with dance and music. Since they have this efficacy, most of the scriptural works in India have from very early times been composed in the form of songs.

[1] They pass also by the name of the *Lays of Padmâ*.

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Section III.—Social Gatherings.

From very early times the practice of Saubhrâtra Milana or *entente cordiale* has been in vogue among the Hindus. It consists in both the sexes forgetting their personal animosities for the time being and joining together with all their hearts in social entertainments. This happy gathering took place in former times on all festive occasions, inspiring new sentiments and ideas, and strengthening the bonds of unity and harmony. Looking about for its history, we find that this healthy custom has obtained since the Vedic age.

In the Vedic Age.—In the Vedic age when the Aryans performed any sacrifice, people of all ranks of society gathered together on the occasion and amused themselves in all possible ways. The distinction of sex was not observed, and males and females partook together of the beverage of soma juice and the food that were offered in the sacrifice. All enmities, all hatreds, all jealousies were sunk in the happy feeling of unity and they all felt like strings of the same musical instrument. The different ranks offered prayers to the god of the sacrifice for conferring peace and happiness on one another.

In the Râmâyaṇa.—On the conclusion of the terrible war, the armies of Râma and Râvaṇa joined in a triumphant shout and embraced one another with the most cordial feelings. A similar bond of unity was also established between the followers of Râma and Vâli after the latter was killed.

In the Mahâbhârata.—Innumerable are the instances in the *Mahâbhârata* of such brotherly unions. In the Râjasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira, people of all ranks and of all lands were invited, and they enjoyed the festivities, forgetting all their differences. The

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princes of the different countries with their relations may be said to have almost lived and moved together. They dined together, talked together, and very intimately mixed with one another on the occasion of the Avabhrita (concluding) bath — so much so that the pangs of separation were very keenly felt and they could not part with one another without exchanges of embrace and other signs of deep cordiality. This was the form that Saubhrâtra Milana of those days took.

In Harivamsha. — All the heroes of the city of Dwârakâ (capital of Shri Krishna) amused themselves together on all festive occasions. When they diverted themselves in various ways in the waters of the sea, whether at Raivataka or in the course of their voyage to the shrine of Pindâraka, they forgot all personal quarrels and differences. That they dined, sat and talked together, is a proof, clear and simple, that they were inspired by brotherly love towards one another.

In the Samhitâs.—On the occasions of worship, as for example, the worship of Shiva, the votaries lived together cordially for several days and helped in the celebration of the festivities. They danced and sang together and with exchanges of embrace parted with one another after the farewell dinner. This conduced largely to create and strengthen the bond of union and fellow-feeling.

In the Jaina Scriptures.—The Jaina festivals in which all the members took part, helped in developing not only devotion to the same religion but also the feeling of cordiality among the members of the sect.

Buddhist Congresses.—When the great religious conferences of Buddhists were started, Shramaṇas (monks) from different countries came as delegates and promoted the feeling of cordiality and unity by living and mixing freely together. Emperor Asoka tried to keep

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up this happy feeling by establishing a brotherly union among the several sects. He created opportunities for the development of a sincere concord and fellow-feeling by bringing people of all classes and creeds to mix together with kindly sentiments. Each Buddhist festival was an occasion for the cultivation of fraternity among the followers of Buddhism.

In the age of Vikramâditya.—Chandragupta II was on the throne when Fa Hien came into India. On the occasion of the Buddhist festival that he witnessed at Pâtaliputra, people from villages flocked to the city and joined in the festivities. A very cordial feeling grew up among them owing to their living and dining together and more especially to their taking part in the festivities with dance, song and music. This served the same purpose as the brotherly gatherings of other times. In these festivities the Shaiva, the Shâkta and the Buddhist, the Shramaṇa and the Brâhmaṇa, mixed with each other on an equal footing and found an equal share of amusement.

In the time of the Vardhana Kings.—In the reign of Shrî Harṣa Vardhana, Hiuen-Thsang witnessed the great conference for religious unification that was held at Prayâga (Allahabad). Worship was offered to Buddha, Shiva and Suryya (Sun) alike, and food and clothing, money and jewels were given away for over a month. This was a most notable instance of an Indian brotherly gathering.

During the reign of the Pâla Kings.—The worship of Dharma preached by Râmâi was also an effective means of creating a brotherly feeling among the several orders of the community. There were sixteen hundred Sannyâsis, who followed this new religion of Râmâi. They were all bound to one another by the tie of unity, brought about by their having to eat and live together

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and to take part in the same religious festivities. Their friends and relations also joined in the Gâjan ceremonies, as Râmâi says in the Puṣpatolana (plucking flowers) Canto of his *Shunya Purâṇa*:—

"Uncles of some and sons of others came, inspired by the feeling that they were all related to one another, and there was none that was not included in the self-same Swarupa Nârâyaṇa (i.e. God)."

"The sixteen hundred together cried out 'all glory (to Dharma)' with cheerful minds."

"Fifty (a large number) courses of dinner were cooked, some say, through the grace of Anâdya (lit. one who has no beginning)."

The gods sat down (to dinner) with merry voices, Viṣṇu sitting down with the Riṣis (sages), and Mahâdeva with all the ascetics and all those persons who had matted hair on their heads.

Âdyanâtha, Mînanâtha, Simgâ, Charamginâtha, Dandapâṇi and the Kinnaras (a class of demi-gods having human bodies and faces like horses) and all the other gods took their seats according to their respective ranks, and the daughter of Janaka (Sîtâ) began to serve them.

The preparation of boiled rice, milk and sugar, that was offered to the god of the sacrifice, was served among the merry party. And the gods partook of it with great relish and cheerful hearts.

After dinner they washed their hands and mouths and masticated (for purifying their mouths) myrobalans and Vahedâ. Then with their minds constantly fixed on the feet (i.e. form and virtues) of Dharma, they retired to their own places.

Râmâi thus fed the gods, not forgetting their votaries also. Offerings of rice, etc., were made to the gods of all sects, and with these offerings were entertained the

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followers of all creeds. It must be said that this social dinner was a very effective means of creating and fostering brotherly feelings.

In the Shrî Dharma-Mangala of Ghanarâma.—Ghanarâma has spoken of males and females joining together in the worship and festivities of Dharma. On these occasions the two sexes mixed together as though they were brothers and sisters. As a token of this happy social gathering, a piece of thread was tied round the wrists of one and all of the party. This ceremony was called Râkhî Vandhana[1] (lit. a tie that will ever keep one fresh in another's memory).

"Ceremoniously welcoming the tree with pure and concentrated minds, they tied pieces of thread round one another's wrists."

This custom of tying threads as a token of brotherly feeling is a very ancient practice, and obtains throughout India at the present day.

In the Gâjan.—The Sannyâsis of the Gâjan and Gambhîrâ are recruited from different castes, but so long as they go through the round of these festivities they observe no caste rules and seem as though they belonged to one and the same social group. They sit and walk together, bathe and worship together. Not only does this feeling of "kith and kin" run among the members of the same party, but it frequently extends to those of adjacent places. The Sannyâsis of one Gâjan go out to neighbouring villages, and, inspired by a strong fellow-feeling, embrace and salute the brother Sannyâsis of those Gâjans. At the conclusion of the festivities, they dine together, forgetting all caste distinctions, on the Shiva-yajana (the "yajna" of Râmâi) day. Under the auspices of the Gambhîrâ party, they

[1] History records instances of râkhîs being presented to each other by allies against a common enemy.

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work together for the common good, and thus reveal the fact that the idea of a collective life governs them. Even the distinction of Hindus and Mohammedans is sunk in this institution.

Brotherly feeling fostered by the Durgâ Pujâ.—On the fourth day of the Durgâ (the creative energy of God, wife of Shiva) Pujâ, after the image is consigned to the waters, the Hindus forget all their personal and other differences and make it a point to offer Vijayâ[1] (the day on which the image is consigned to the waters being called Vijayâ Dashamî) greetings to one another. It is a very sweet and cheering spectacle—that of people embracing one another and paying their due respects and compliments according to age, rank, etc. That the whole society feels oneness in its every limb is brought home to Hindu minds on this occasion.

It would thus be apparent that life in India has ever afforded ample scope for the promotion of the sense of national solidarity, and has given rise to certain characteristic conventions, which, like the other conventions of other peoples, deserve attention from the students of Social Man.

[1] Vijayâ is observed in one form or another all over India. The greetings have the same significance as Christmas and New Year greetings in Christian lands.

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CHAPTER X.

BUDDHIST AND JAINA ELEMENTS IN MODERN HINDUISM.

SECTION I.—THE HÎNAYÂNA SCHOOL[1] OF BUDDHISM.

DURING Shâkyasimha's life-time no steps were taken to worship Buddha through an idol. It was after he had attained final emancipation (i.e. after he had breathed his last) that processions were started with his corpse and festivities held in his honour. It was on the full-moon day of the month of Vaishâkha (April-May) that he first saw the light of the day, and it was also on that day that he breathed his last.

Festivities held on the Vaishâkhi Purnimâ day.

Hence on this one day were celebrated the festival of his nativity as well as the festivities of his attainment of final emancipation. By way of memorial, a large stupa (mound) was erected over his hair, nails, teeth, bones, clothes and Kamandalu (water-pot used by ascetics), and such other sacred objects. It was here that the above festivals were celebrated. Occasions like these afforded the Buddhists opportunities to hold festivities and to make them well attended.

Confession of sin by the sinner himself.

At the time of initiation, the Buddhist had to resign himself to the protection of the Triratna.[2] It is laid

[1] See Hackmann's *Buddhism as a Religion* (Probsthain, London, 1910).

[2] The Buddhist Trinity, lit. three jewels—Buddha, Dharma and Samgha.

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down in the treatise named *Prâtimokṣa* (i.e. pointing to Mokṣa or salvation) that confession of sin or guilt by the sinner himself is a means of absolution for four kinds of sin or offence. The sect that observed these rules was nicknamed by the later Buddhist sect as Hînayâna, i.e. follower of Lower (Lesser) Vehicle.

The Hînayânist also offered worship to Buddha on his seat, or footprints, by imagining him to have established himself there. And it is very likely that it was this practice that subsequently led the performers of Dharma's Gâjan to introduce the offering of worship to Buddha Pada (foot-mark of Buddha) or Dharma-pâdukâ (sandals of Dharma). The votaries of Shiva in the Gambhîrâ have also adopted, and up till now preserved, the Hînayâna idea[1] of being absolved from sin by confessing it as enjoined in *Prâtimokṣa*. Hence it may reasonably be said that the worship of the image of Buddha and the festivities that were held in his honour are being still enacted in the Gambhîrâ temple only under different names and modified forms. Materials for the Gambhîrâ festival have thus been furnished by the festivities that the Hînayâna Buddhists held on the full-moon day of the month of Vaishâkha.

Materials for the Gambhîrâ furnished by the festivities of the Hînayâna Buddhists.

Section II.—Jaina Festivities.

The Jaina religion was founded in the age which preceded the founding of Buddhism. Just as Buddhism has provided room for more than one Buddha, so the Jainas also believe that there have been several Tirthamkaras, and that others will follow in the time to come. Different from Hinduism in certain principles, Jainism has not wholly done away with, rather it shares, the orthodox belief in heaven and the body of gods headed

[1] See p. 20. This is a Jaina custom too.

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by Indra. Although slightly different here and there, the descriptions in the Jaina *Purâṇas* are similar to those of the *Râmâyaṇa*, the *Mahâbhârata* and the orthodox *Purâṇas*. The Tirthamkaras, as the historical and semi-historical pioneers of Jainism are designated, may be regarded as belonging to the same category as the Avatâras (persons regarded as God incarnate) of the Hindus. Mixed up with the lives and activities of these Tirthamkaras are to be found accounts of the ancient religion of the country as well as of its kings.

The Tirthamkaras.

The first Jina (chief saint after whom the sect has been named) of the Jainas was Riṣabha[1] Deva. The name of his father was Nâbhi (the navel) and that of his mother Merudevî (the backbone). He was born at the auspicious moment of planetary conjunction known as Brahma-mahâyoga, on the ninth day of the dark half of the month of Chaitra (March-April). The birthday festival of this first Jina is celebrated with great care and reverence.

Riṣabha Deva, the first Jina. His birthday festival.

It is said that at the time of Riṣabha's birth, Indra and the other gods came to see him. The Kailâsa mountain (the reputed abode of Shiva) is also found to have some relation with him. It was here that he is said to have attained the state of Nirvâṇa (emancipation).

Like the Buddhists, the Jainas also had no manner of restriction to attending dance and music. For, as we learn from the Jaina *Harivamsha*, the first Jina Riṣabha was present at the dance of Nîlânjasâ, a dancing girl in the service of Indra. This first Jina went to the Kai-

[1] When she went with child Risabha Deva, Meru Devî saw in a vision that Riṣabha Deva was entering her womb in the likeness of a bull Riṣabha. The child was probably named after this bull.—*Harivamsha* (*Ariṣṭanemi Purâṇa*).

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lâsa mountain and thence, surrounded by a large number of Gaṇis (probably the same word as Gaṇa, meaning a host, a large number ; used more especially to denote the ghost attendants on Shiva), retired to the Siddha-sthâna, i.e. the place where he achieved success. On this occasion the gods worshipped him with incense and flowers.

The story of this first Jina will be found to be similar to that of Mahâdeva of the Hindu, his connexion with the Kailâsa mountain and his receiving homage of the gods being simply an echo of what has been said of the latter. The birthday festival of this Riṣabha and the practice of offering worship to him seem to have contributed not a little to the starting of the Gambhîrâ affairs.

The other Jina festivals.

The Jainas commemorate the times of appearance (i.e. birth) of their Tirthamkara Jinas by holding festivities annually on the occasions. After Jinendra (the chief of the Jinas) was born in the month of Jyaistha (May-June), the gods headed by Indra solemnized the occasion by holding festivities in his honour. Similarly in the months of Chaitra, Vaishâkha and Jyaiṣtha were celebrated the birthday festivals of the other Jinas.[1] On these occasions the Jaina Âjîvakas (priests) offered worship to the Jinas with resin, lights, flowers, etc., in their Vihâras (Buddhist and Jaina temples are so called), and also offered prayers and sang their glories with the object of invoking their blessings. The temples were beautifully illuminated at night. The Jainas also installed the idol of Jina and offered worship to it.

[1] *Ariṣṭanemi Purâṇa*, 14. The festival was celebrated on the bank of the Kâlindî (a river). See the chapter on Mahâvira's Predecessors and Disciples in Stevenson's *Heart of Jainism*.

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Festivities in honour of the birth of Pârshwanâtha.

Pârshwanâtha is the twenty-third Tirthamkara, the immediate predecessor of Mahâvîra, the reputed founder of Jainism. He was the son of Ashwasena, ruler of Benares, by his wife Vâmâ Devî. The conception took place on the fourth day of the dark half of the month of Chaitra. Just after his birth, the complexion of Pârshwanâtha's body was found to be blue, and there were snake-like forms over his person (whence the epithet Phani-bhuṣaṇa, adorned with snake; this is the title of Shiva also). At the moment of his birth the gods blew trumpets in heaven, flowers were scattered in profusion from the skies, and the damsels of heaven entered the lying-in room, scattered flowers and performed other benedictory ceremonies there. It was thus that the gods and goddesses signalized his nativity; and his father "released the prisoners and engaged beautiful girls to dance and sing amidst exclamations of triumph, shouts of ulu, ulu (uttered by women on festive occasions), blowings of conches, and various other benedictory ceremonies".[1] It was thus with dance, song, music and with gifts that the nativity festivities of the Jinas were observed.

He gained Ananta-vaibhava Kaivalya jnâna in the month of Chaitra.

When he came of age, Pârshwanâtha travelled from place to place to preach the Jaina religion. The redemption of the fallen was the only object of his life. In the forenoon of the fourth day of the dark half of the month of Chaitra when the moon had entered the region of Vishâkhâ (the sixteenth lunar mansion consisting of four stars) he acquired the Ananta-vaibhava Kaivalya jnâna (the knowledge that leads to attainment of identity with the divine essence and thus to final emancipation of the soul from all bondages, and which is Ananta-vaibhava, i.e. the repository or source of

[1] *Aristanemi Purâṇa* (*Harivamsha*)

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eternal bliss) under a Dhâtaki tree in Benares. Thereafter reports of his supernatural greatness and powers spread far and wide in all directions. Bent upon doing good to the Jainas, he came, in the course of his travels, to the country of the Pundras (North Bengal), which has ever since been regarded by the Jainas as a sacred region.

To commemorate his acquisition of the above knowledge, the Jainas offer worship to his memory and hold a festival in his honour in the month of Chaitra. This is the celebrated spring festival of the Jainas.

It is under circumstances like the above that the Jaina festivals were started, and have ever since been practised in the months of Chaitra, Vaishâkha and Jyaiṣtha.[1]

Adoption of Jaina festivities by the Pundras (N. Bengal).

The Jaina festivities were first adopted and celebrated by the Pundras immediately after the visit of Pârshwanâtha to their country, and have ever since been duly observed. Through the efforts of Gorakṣanâtha and Neminâtha, and thanks to the esteem in which Jainism was held by the mother of Govindachandra (*c.* twelfth century?), a large number of Jaina Âshramas (hermitages or retreats) sprang up in the Pundra country. Thus like Buddhism, Jainism was also largely favoured in Bengal.

Eclecticism in Gambhîrâ.

The birthday festival of the first Jina, celebrated on the ninth day of the dark half of the month of Chaitra, came in course of time to be mixed up with the birthday and the Parinirvâṇa festivals of Buddha in the month of Vaishâkha; and we may reasonably go a step further and say that in course of time again, all the Jaina and Buddhist festivities of the months of Chaitra

[1] The Nandishwara festival of the Jainas extends over eight days, from the eighth day of the light half of the months of Âṣâdha (June-July), Kârtika (October-November) and Phâlgoon (February-March), to the full-moon day, and is celebrated in every Jaina temple with dance, song, music and the offering of worship, etc.

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and Vaishâkha became lost in and contributed to the development of the festivities that are now known under the names of Gâjan and Gambhîrâ. Or, in other words, the Jaina festivities were in course of time incorporated in, and superseded by, the Buddhist ones, which again were ultimately appropriated by the Hindus and have ever since passed as Shaiva. The close resemblance that exists between Jainism and Shaivaism leads one naturally to suspect that the former with its whole body of Jinas has become wholly merged in Hinduism.

Identity between Jina and Shiva.

Seeing that the images of the Jinas are like those of ascetics lost in mental abstraction and decorated with figures of serpents (as the image of Shiva is conceived to be), they were in later times (when Shaivaism was getting the upper-hand) supposed to be identical with those of Shiva. That is, the Jinas gradually yielded place to Shiva and the Jaina festivals also lost themselves in the Gambhîrâ. There was once a large number of Jaina hermitages in what is to-day the district of Malda (situated in the Pundra country); and there are ample evidences to show that Jainism[1] was once firmly established over the whole of Bengal. Even now relics of this creed are to be met with in the district of Bogra (in North Bengal).

Section III.—The Mahâyâna School[2] of Buddhism.

Buddhist Assemblies.

The doctrines preached by Shâkyasimha could not retain their original character after he had passed away. His disciples apprehended that their creed was in danger

[1] Mrs. Stevenson's *Heart of Jainism* is the only systematic work in English on the history, philosophy, mythology, literature and art of this creed.

[2] See the chapter on "The Birth of Buddhism" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes* by the present author. "One common ocean of devotionalism was being fed by Mahâyâna, as by Shaiva, Sanra, Vaiṣṇava, Jaina and other theologies."

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of losing its purity, and to decide their course of action under the circumstances, are said to have met together at Râjagriha. In this assembly a careful and elaborate discussion took place regarding Vinaya and other parts of the canon. After this, several other assemblies were also convened, by which the Tripitaka or Threefold Canon (i.e. Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma) was defined and recorded.

The disciples of Shâkya became divided into numerous camps even during the sitting of one of the first conventions, known as Dharma mahâ samgati. One of these parties professed its devotion to the old rigid order and expressed its intention to adhere to it. The views of this sect of Buddhism were not popular, since it could not find out a means of emancipation that would be equally applicable to the wise and the ignorant. According to this primitive form of Buddhism, only the Bhikṣus (monks) were entitled to practise the austerities and obtain through them the path for emancipation.

One of the new orders, however, that sprang up in opposition to the orthodox sect of Buddhism threw open the doors of emancipation for all mankind. They proclaimed with a clear voice that through meditation and prayer every man, the wise and the ignorant alike, would be able to attain salvation very easily and very soon. The sect that announced this liberal or rather popular theory and showed an easy way of emancipation to one and all, assumed the title of Mahâyâna (lit. following a high, i.e. broad, way) and nicknamed their illiberal and narrow-minded opponents Hînayâna (lit. following a low and narrow way).

Mahâyâna camp.

It was this Mahâyâna branch that contributed largely to the propagation of the theory of Shunya or the void. Like the Vaiṣṇava sect of Hinduism, they placed mercy and devotion above everything else. Their religious

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principle may briefly be explained in the following way. Sâdhanâ (i.e. conscious efforts at devoting one's self to the service and thought of God), which can lift up our souls above gross materialism, is based upon Dhyâna (abstract religious contemplation) and Dhâraṇâ (steady abstraction of mind from all other considerations and concentration of it upon the idea of God or the religious goal aimed at). Besides this, they also enjoined, as articles of their faith, the extension of mercy and sympathy towards all creatures. It was this broad and liberal aspect of the newer form of Buddhism that tempted men and women alike to embrace it in the hope of finding peace and comfort therefrom; and thus succeeded in giving it predominance over all the other creeds of the country.

Nâgârjuna.

All the tenets of Mahâyanic Buddhism can be traced definitely back to Ashwaghoṣa,[1] who played a prominent part in the famous Congress convened by Kushan, Emperor Kâṇiṣka in Kashmir about 100 A.D. (?), when and where the schism may be said to have been officially effected. Nâgârjuna was, however, the first to systematize and explain Mahâyânist philosophy in a methodical way. He explained the object and goal of Buddhism to men and women of all ranks, and held it up before them as the only means of warding off trials and tribulations of all kinds, and then imparted to them instructions as to the attainment of Nirvâṇa. His religious view, however, does not seem to have been a purely Buddhist one, for he offered worship to the Shaiva goddess Chandikâ (of course as the personified energy of Buddha) and consulted her opinion as to the good or evil likely to spring from intended actions and guided himself accordingly. Thus, the Mahâyâna

[1] See V. Sâstri's communication in J.R.A.S. (London, 1914).

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creed will seem to have been largely indebted to the Shaiva one.

The Mâdhyamikas and Neo-Hinduism.

Nâgârjuna's Order known as the Mâdhyamikas held that for the acquisition of religious merit, it was essential to cultivate charity, love of peace, and fortitude, to form character, develop understanding, and acquire the habit of withdrawing the mind from the senses and concentrate it wholly on the contemplation of God. The new form of Nirvâṇa that they set up before their eyes was not for man alone; but they even affirmed that the lower order of gods also such as Brahmâ, Viṣṇu, Maheshwara, Kâlî, Târâ and others might be entitled, by passing through the higher and higher processes of contemplation and meditation, to the attainment of Nirvâṇa. For this respect and consideration that the Mâdhyamika Order of Mahâyânism showed for the Hindu pantheon, the Hindu Brâhmaṇas began to look upon them with favour and good-feeling.

The reason why the Brâhmaṇas, the leaders of Hinduism, were receiving so favourably the Buddhists of the Mahâyâna sect with their religious views and principles, is thus not far to seek. As the teachings of the Mahâyâna branch of Buddhism were similar to there of liberal Hinduism, many were the people that were consciously or unconsciously influenced by them; and those who contracted an aversion to the observance of sacrifices and other ceremonies enjoined by the Brâhmaṇas, retired into the woods, in order to devise the best methods of performing them mentally. It was these people that might be said to be really houseless Bhikṣus (Buddhist mendicants), unaffected by pleasure and pain. They had renounced the ostentatious performance of sacrifices and the offering of worship to the lower order of deities, and took unmixed delight in the contemplation of the form of Maheshwara.

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Mahâyânic Shunya the same as Upaniṣadic Brahma.

Now it has been said in the Upaniṣad: "Although destitute of hands and feet, yet he takes up things and walks with great speed. *Sans* eyes and *sans* ears, yet he sees and hears. He knows all that is knowable, but none can know him. He is said to be the foremost and the greatest."—*Shwetâshwa*, 3, 19.

He, who has no body and yet can do all things, who is the repository of all attributes, is the greatest of beings. It is he who is Maheshwara (the God of Gods), who is the Lord of all. It was because the Shunya-vâda (theory of Shunya, the void) of Mahâyânism was based on such an idea, that the Hindus received the Mahâyâna sect so very favourably. A careful study will show that the mahâshunya or the great void of Mahâyânic Buddhism was no other than the Brahma or Maheshwara of the Upaniṣad.

The doctrine that "All is void," which is the analogue of the Hindu notion that "All is Brahma," became popular with the Mahâyânists through Nâgârjuna's Order of Mâdhyamikas, but is at least as old as Ashwaghoṣa. It was this sub-sect that in later times inspired the *Shunya Purâṇa* of Râmâi Pandit and consolidated the basis of the Gambhîrâ festival.

Tantric Buddhism.

From the Mâdhyamika[1] branch sprang up in later times the esoteric branch of Buddhism commonly known as Tantric Buddhism. This sect has given rise to such names as "Mantra-yâna," "Kâla-chakra," "Vajra-yâna". From all these sects of Buddhism the Gambhîrâ festival has drawn its materials.

Idol-worship by the Mahâyânists.

The Mahâyâna sect had introduced idol-worship[2] into its fold. Provisions were made for the worship of Avalokiteshwara, Manjushrî and the Dhyâni Buddhas

[1] *Vide* H. P. Sâstri's Introduction to Vasu's *Modern Buddhism* (Probsthain, London, 1914).

[2] See Mrs. Getty's *Gods of Northern Buddhism*.

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together with their personified energies as their wives known as Târâ, and others. In different places different conceptions were formed of the forms, complexions and vâhanas (animate conveyances) of Bodhisattvas and the Shaktis (personified energies).

Vairochana is said to have ridden a lion, Akṣobhya an elephant, Ratnasambhava a horse, and Amitâbha a goose or peacock, and Amoghasiddhi is said to have travelled on the back of Garuda (the king of birds, who according to the Hindus bears Viṣṇu on his back).

Deities of the Mâdhyamikas received by the Hindus.

The Brâhmaṇas unhesitatingly welcomed into the fold of Hinduism the Buddhist deities Padmapâṇi, Manjushrî and Vajrapâṇi Bodhisattva as Viṣṇu, Maheshwara and Indra respectively, or in other words, they became indirectly and unconsciously converted to Buddhistic creed. Buddhism was also influenced by Hindu ideas because the Hindu deity Mahâdeva was stealing into the Buddhist community, which, however, for the time being, relegated him to a position inferior to that of Buddha.

Buddhist holidays.

The particular days on which the Buddhists held religious discussions were known as Uposatha. Nothing but religious observances was allowed on these days, which were like Sabbaths to the Buddhists. It was enjoined that they should have absolute rest from the pursuit of all mundane matters on these occasions. This practice is found to be even now observed on the last day of the Gambhîrâ festival, when its organizers resign themselves wholly to entertainments and diversions and totally abstain from the pursuit of trade, agriculture, and all other worldly concerns. The merit accruing from listening to the Gambhîrâ hymns, etc., is considered to be equal to that derived from listening to the religious aphorisms of the Buddhists.

Buddhist Car-festival.

The Buddhists of Ceylon celebrate in the spring a festival known as Mâra-Vinâshaka (lit. the destroyer of

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Mâra, i.e. Tempter, the god of amatory passions). In Bengal also, worship is offered to Mahâdeva, the destroyer of Kâma (the awakener of passions), in the spring. The birth and Parinirvâṇa festivals of Buddha are celebrated in Vaishâkha when the Gambhîrâ and Gâjan festivals are also solemnized. A car-festival of Buddha is also observed in Varendra (North Bengal) under the name of Rathâi or Ratha chharata. It is on record that a car-festival was also held in honour of Dharma in connexion with his worship.

Hindu element in Buddhist Trinity.

Although the Hînayâna and the Mahâyâna sects differed on the cardinal principles of religion, yet neither was behind the other in its respect for the Triratna or Trinity, which, in course of time, assumed definite material forms. Thus, on the right side of the image of Buddha sat Dharma as his spouse, while on his left sat Samgha in the male garb; and it became the custom to offer worship to their joint-images. It is said that Âdi Buddha created this female Dharma out of Shunya or the void; and it was from him that the gods Shiva, etc., sprang into being. He is the foremost of all the gods.

Hindu and Buddhist festivities mixed up.

It will thus be seen that the germs of the present-day Gambhîrâ worship are to be found in the Buddhist festivities that were celebrated on the full-moon day of the month of Vaishâkha in honour of both Hindu and Buddhist deities. The hymns of the Gambhîrâ even now reflect the controversies that arose from differences of opinion between the Hînayâna and the Mahâyâna sects and contain elaborate discussions on Creation after their different philosophies. The Buddhist festivals were celebrated with offerings[1] of fruits, flowers, incense and

[1] *Milinda Poinho: Whether Buddha accepts worship or not.* "Mahârâj (or king), if we are to reap here the fruit of evil actions done before (i.e. in a former life), then it is undeniable that both

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food. Dance and music were also performed on these occasions. The offering of food before the image of Buddha is not opposed to the Buddhist creed.

good and evil actions of this life and of previous lives must bear then respective fruits without fail. Hence it is to be understood, O King! that even if not accepted by or acceptable to Tathâgata (Buddha) who has attained Parinirvâṇa (final emancipation), actions done in his honour or to gain his favours cannot but be productive of corresponding fruits."

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CHAPTER XI.

THE NATIONAL FESTIVALS OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

SECTION I.—THE AGE OF RELIGIOUS ECLECTICISM.

IT was Emperor Shrî Harṣa (606-47) who brought glory to the Vardhana line of kings. His father had been a powerful King of Thaneswar, near Delhi, who extended his dominions by conquering Malwa, Gujrat and other places and also by defeating the Huns on the north-western frontier.

On his accession to the throne, Harṣa's attention was first given to warfare. Shashâmka,[1] *alias* Narendra Gupta, a powerful monarch of Eastern India, had put to death Harṣa's brother Râjya Vardhana in the struggle for hegemony in Northern India. To avenge himself on him, Harṣa invaded Shashâmka's territories. Ultimately a part of Bengal and the city of Gauda fell under his sway. Shashâmka ruled over Northern Râdha, which was very close to Gauda; and very likely Magadha and Gauda were also under his rule. But he had generally passed for the King of Gauda. Shashâmka, King of Gauda.

After his conquest of Gauda, Harṣa sent his army in different directions. It was about this time that he

[1] Latest reliable details about Shashâmka are to be found in Banerji's Bengali work, *Bângâlâr Itihâsa*, "Early History of Bengal" (1915). The reign of Harṣa has been fully described in Smith's *Early History of India* (1914).

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brought under his sway practically the whole of Eastern India.

Tantrism, Hindu and Buddhist.

At the time of the break-up of the Gupta Empire (*c.* A.D. 580), some valiant members of the family who were ruling neighbouring countries as tributary princes, set up a large number of small independent kingdoms. Shashâmka Narendra Gupta was probably one such king of the Gupta line. He was a Shaiva and professed himself to be a staunch follower of the creed. Indeed, these scions of the Gupta family who were scattered over the country as petty chiefs, followed all of them the creed of the last[1] Gupta Emperors, and thus came to have firm faith in the non-Buddhist systems of worship. Their professed creed was in reality a mixture of the Mantra-yâna form of the Mahâyâna branch of Buddhism and the new Tantric form that the Shaivas and the Shâktas had developed among themselves. Nay, it may with fairness be said of the whole Hindu and Buddhist communities of the time, that they had really lost sight of the differences in their respective creeds and had come to stand on a common religious platform, the planks of which were supplied alike by Buddhism and the Purâṇic and Tantric form of Hinduism. They had but little respect for the injunctions laid down in the Vedic texts or Tripitaka. The Brâhmaṇas had in fact begun to practise Tantrism.

Worship of Shiva and Shakti in Gauda.

Tantrism based on the Shaiva and the Shâkta creed was accepted as personal religion by Shashâmka and other kings of Eastern India. Hence it was that Shaiva Tantrism largely spread throughout Bengal.

But when Harṣa assumed the reins of government over these regions, Buddhism was re-established among the people. This Buddhism was not, however, genuine ;

[1] The first Guptas were worshippers of Viṣṇu.

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it was simply the Tantric form that the Mantra-yâna sect of the Mahâyâna branch had lately developed. However, it was this form of Buddhism, difficult to distinguish from neo-Hinduism, that was being re-established about this time in various places of Upper India through Harṣa's policy of religious neutrality.

Catholicity of Harṣa: he worshipped Shiva, Suryya and Buddha alike.

The line of the Vardhana Kings to which he belonged contained princes of various faiths; some were Shaivas, some Sauras, and others Buddhists. Puṣyabhuti, one of the earliest kings of the line, was a Shaiva from boyhood. Prabhâkara Vardhana, father of Harṣa, was a staunch Saura (Sun-worshipper). He used daily to worship the Sun-god on a crystal plate with red lotuses. During his reign the Saura religion exercised considerable influence. Râjya Vardhana, elder brother of Harṣa, and their sister Râjyashrî, were again earnest advocates of Buddhism. Harṣa himself adopted, one after another, the Hînayâna, the Mahâyâna and ultimately the Mantrayâna creed; but he worshipped equally the images of Shiva, Suryya and the different Buddhas. He also established their images in temples. In his early life he was a Shaiva; later a devoted Buddhist, and during his last days he again professed himself to be a staunch Maheshwara (i.e. follower of Maheshwara, Shiva). Hence it cannot be said with any degree of certainty which of these was the creed of his heart. He performed various religious observances, but was not partial to any. It may be inferred that it was for the people of India an age of religious unification; and Harṣa madė it a part of his state-craft to follow the subjects in the practice of those observances which had come to find favour with them.

Thus during the reign of the Vardhana dynasty, the people celebrated the Shaiva, Shâkta, Saura and Buddhist festivals alike. As all the different sects had

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Religious unification

faith in Tantrism, all the religious festivities began to be unified and grow identical in character. The Buddhist spring festival and the birth and Parinirvâṇa festivals of Buddha (held in the month of Vaishâkha) as well as the Jaina spring and Shaiva festivals were celebrated about the same time; and, as we have seen before, the worship and festivals in honour of the various gods and goddesses by the Mantra-yâna sect of Mahâyâna Buddhism were similar to those performed by the Hindus. Hence it will be seen that the festivities and entertainments of the whole people were the same, no matter how many different sects and denominations there were superficially. And in course of time the tendency of mutual imitation became so great among the several creeds and sects that the difference between Hindu and Buddhist festivals came to be very slight.

These festivals that were held in the months of Chaitra (March-April) and Vaishâkha (April-May) gradually contributed to the growth and development of the Gambhîrâ. It may be noted here that Hindu and Buddhist Tantrisms are so identical in character that even a trained eye can scarcely be expected to find out the nice points of difference.

From a study of the festivities and entertainments that were actually held during the reign of Harṣa, it would appear that the age of religious eclecticism reached its climax.[1] It was not among his subjects only that a harmonious spirit was at work tending towards

[1] Shrî Harṣa Deva was himself a poet and there was in his court the famous poet named Bâṇabhatta. It was by this court that such dramas of genuine poetical merits as *Nâgânanda*, *Ratnâvalî*, *Priyadarshikâ*, etc., were published. Jimutavâhana, the hero of *Nâgânanda*, was a Buddhist, while his wife Mâlyavatî was a model follower of the Shaiva cult. A study of this drama will lead one to infer that about this time a harmonious spirit tending towards unification was governing both Buddhism and Shaivaism.

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religious unification. He, too, was influenced by it; and for the benefit of his subjects, without distinction of creed, he spent large sums of money in erecting inns and hotels, dispensaries and hospitals, Vihâras and temples and the like. Throughout the length and breadth of his vast empire he allowed equal rights to his Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu subjects; the people enjoyed royal patronage equally. The sincere love of the king for his people made them deeply attached to him and must have been an additional factor in promoting toleration and good-will. When the ruler was such, his subjects also could not help driving away all religious animosities and were unconsciously drawn towards a more or less unified faith. Although he was a Buddhist by creed, his subjects gladly took part in the religious festivities of the emperor and helped him in the practice of his religion; nay, they even went to the extent of following him in their own festivities. Only an insignificant fraction of them, viz. the Brâhmaṇas of the older Vedic order, felt dislike for the king because of his Buddhist predilection.

Section II.—Two Festivities Witnessed by Hiuen-Thsang.

Hiuen-Thsang's visit to India.

To learn particulars of Buddhism from its followers in India and to collect Buddhist treatises of various classes, Hiuen-Thsang, the Chinese pilgrim, left China in 629 A.D., and made his way to India through Central Asia. He was a member of the Mahâyâna sect of Buddhism.

He appeared before the court of Harṣa, who received him with due respect. Enjoying the favour of the king, the pilgrim remained a state-guest for a long time and found his royal host deeply attached towards Buddhism.

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The accounts of Indian festivals.

It is a matter for regret that in no historical, religious or poetical work of the time any detailed and systematic account is found of the festivities that were then in vogue. Fortunately for us, however, a foreigner speaking a foreign tongue, viz. a pious Chinese pilgrim, took pains to record in his language a large chapter of the Indian history of the time; and it has been accepted by posterity as a very accurate record of those days.

Reliable proofs have been found as to the accuracy of his descriptions, and thus he may be said to have illumined a dark chapter of the mediæval history of India. He saw with his own eyes the festivities that were held during the reign of Harṣa, and we reproduce below in brief what he said of them.

(*a*) *The Special Festival at Kanauj* (A.D. 643).

The Kânyakubja festival described: celebrated with dance, song and music.

It was this Chinese pilgrim that was the occasion of the special assembly that was for the first time called at Kânyakubja (modern Kanauj) and was followed by festivities exhibiting the image of Buddha. He obtained an interview with Emperor Shrî Harṣa in Bengal, and the latter was so highly satisfied with his religious discourse that on his return to the capital Kanauj with Hiuen-Thsang, he convened a public assembly to let the people in general have an opportunity of listening to his learned religious talks.

At this congregation assembled a large number of Jaina and Buddhist Shramaṇas and Bhikṣus as well as Brâhmaṇas. A huge temporary pavilion was erected for the purpose; and inside it a hundred feet high temple was built for holding festivities in honour of Buddha, a human-size image of whom was also established there. The Emperor himself carried on his shoulders a

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small gold image of Buddha for a bath in the Ganges and after ablution brought it back to the temple.[1] This festival extended from the 1st to the 21st day of the month of Chaitra (March-April).

Provision was made here on a lavish scale for the performances of dance and music, vocal and instrumental, and every day the festivities opened with these. Shramaṇas and Brâhmaṇas, natives and foreigners, were fed alike with various articles of food in plenty.

One day the Brâhmaṇas, jealous of the Buddhists, are said to have set fire to this huge pavilion and a portion of it was burnt to ashes.

The Chaitra festival of Harṣa.

The above festival which was held in the month of Chaitra was henceforward turned into an annual one. And in course of time this Chaitra (spring) festival of Kanauj by Harṣa has developed or rather degenerated into our Gambhîrâ and Gâjan festival. At least it has materially helped in the gradual development of the latter.

In later times to commemorate the burning of the pavilion, various feats were exhibited with fire after the festival was over. This part of the festivities also has not been neglected in the Gambhîrâ. For even now various diverting feats are performed under the name of Phulkhelâ (lit. diversion with flowers) both in the Gambhîrâ and Gâjan festivals. The Phulkhelâ is performed in the following way. The Bhaktas or Sannyâsis divide themselves into two opposite parties and kindle a fire with small pieces of wood, etc. They then snatch these burning pieces and hurl them at one

[1] Similar ceremonies of bathing and worshipping the image are to be met with also in connexion with the installation ceremony of the phallus of Shiva in the Gâjan of Dharma and the Gambhîrâ of Âdyâ.

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another. As observed before, this is simply a reproduction of the burning of the pavilion at Kanauj.[1]

Processions.

In the above spring festival a procession was started with the image of Buddha. The principal tributary chiefs with elephants, horses, etc., and the common people joined this procession and it was attended by dancers, singers and musicians. On this occasion flowers of gold were given away. The procession passed round the city and then returned to the place of festival. This practice of starting processions is still observed in the Gambhîrâ and the Gâjan of Shiva and Dharma.

(*b*) *The Quinquennial Festival at Allahabad* (*A.D. 643*).

The festival at Prayâga described.

Hiuen-Thsang witnessed a grand festival at Prayâga (Allahabad).[2] It was a festival of charity, under the directions of Emperor Harṣa. Upon the celebration of the Kânyakubja festival, the Emperor came to

[1] Even now on the eve of the Doal-yâtrâ festival a fire-festival is held under the name of Nedâpodâ in some places, Medhâpodâ in others, and Âgchi in still others. Probably it was intended to insinuate the burning to ashes of the Nedâs, i.e. clean-shaved Buddhists, by the Brâhmaṇas. Although a reason for the celebration of this festival is to be found in the Shâstra, yet the above seems to be the original cause.

[2] "Every Bhikṣu or Buddhist ascetic had to confess his own sins twice in the month—on the full-moon and on the new-moon day. Gradually this practice was introduced among the householders also, but it was not always convenient to observe. Accordingly King Asoka started a great festival for the atonement of sins. At first it was ordained both to confess one's own sins and to practise the virtue of charity on this occasion. Subsequently, however, the first clause was omitted in the case of householders. This festival of charity was a quinquennial one. It was once observed in Prayâga in the 7th century A.D., when Hiuen-Thsang the Chinese pilgrim witnessed it."—*The Religious Sects of India*, by A. K. Datta.

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Prayâga and performed this quinquennial one. Every year of its celebration, it was preceded by the calling of a huge assembly like that of Kanauj.

This great festival was held upon the vast field lying in the centre of the ground near the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna at Allahabad. This wide field of festivities was, as it were, a field of delight; it was enclosed on all sides by a beautiful fence of rose trees always sparkling with lovely blossoms and flowers in abundance. Inside this enclosure were beautifully furnished houses filled with gold and silver, silk clothes and other precious articles of gift. There were erected in front of these store-houses and in rows one hundred houses each commodious enough for the sitting down to dinner of one hundred persons at the same time. In compliance with the requisition of Harṣa, all the tributary princes assembled at this congregation, and innumerable were the orphans and the diseased, the poor and the needy that also gathered together here. Besides, innumerable Brâhmaṇas of Northern India and a very large number of ascetics of non-Brâhmaṇical orders were also very respectfully invited. From the religious ceremonies that were observed on this occasion, it is reasonably inferred that the organizers were at great pains to bring about an unprecedented religious unification.

The festivities, the gifts and the worship extended over seventy-five days. On the first day a cottage made of leaves was erected on the bank of the river and inside it was installed an image of Buddha. As soon as this was done, untold rich clothing and valuable ornaments were distributed. On the second day an image of the Sun and on the third an image of Shiva were also installed; but the quantity of gifts came down to one-half. On the fourth day, to the great delight of

The gifts.

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ten thousand Buddhist Shramaṇas, vast riches were distributed to them. Each of them was the recipient of precious food, drink, flowers and perfumes in plenty, and over and above these, one hundred gold coins, one pearl and one rich wrapper for the body. The next twenty days were devoted to the reception of Brâhmaṇas. The next ten days were distributed riches and other things to the Jainas and the people of other creeds. Then after the Bhikṣus coming from far-off places were gratified with gifts for the same period, the orphan and the helpless, the diseased and the poor received various kinds of help for full one month.

Homage to the tutelary deities of the ten quarters of the globe.

In the course of this festival Harṣa offered worship to Shiva, the Sun, the Buddhas and the tutelary deities of the ten directions. It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the tributary princes of the whole empire also celebrated similar Gift-festivities in their own territories, and there they played the part of the giver (i.e. gave away money, clothes, etc.), like Harṣa. This is as much as to say that in this age of religious unification, in every tributary territory also homage was rendered alike to the Sun, Shiva and the Buddhas. On these occasions also, as in the time of Fa Hien, provision was made, in connexion with Buddhist festivities, for entertaining the people with dance and music.

Development of the Gambhîrâ.

The provisions that are met with in the present-day Gambhîrâ for confessing one's own sin before Shiva and for worshipping Shiva and the other gods with the tutelary deities of the ten quarters of the globe, seem to be but relics of this Imperial festival. In Buddhist festivities of this nature, in the time of Râmâi Pandit (twelfth century?), four Pandits with their respective gatis (devotees) of a fixed number (Râmâi had sixteen) had to attend them; and the hero or the principal organizer of the Dharmapujâ was made to play the rôle

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of Dânapati (master of charities) like Harṣa and provision was made for distributing in gifts a large amount of money. The ceremony of muktâ-mangala (the auspicious pearl) that was observed in this connexion in tne time of Râmâi Pandit is a clear proof that at this time also pearl was given away just as Harṣa gave away gold and pearl to Buddhist mendicants. Like Harṣa's installation and worship of the images of three gods on three successive days, the Gâjan festivities also extend over three days, and the feeding ceremony of the latter performed on the last day under the name of Shivayajana is also a poor representation of the sumptuous feast that the Emperor provided on the occasion of his festival.

Religious Eclecticism in Bengal.

In the course of his travels in the eastern part of the country, Hiuen-Thsang visited Pundra-Vardhana, the capital of the Pundras in North Bengal. There were twenty Buddhist Samghârâmas, and three hundred Buddhist preachers lived there. The pilgrim noticed also over one hundred Hindu temples and a good number of Jaina devotees. In the southern part of Gauda circle, adjacent to this territory, King Shashâmka had celebrated festivals both of the Shaiva and the Saura creed. The movement of religious unification was thus at work in Eastern India; since, although Shashâmka[1] was a Shaiva, there was in his kingdom a Buddhist Samghârâma (monastery) named Raktamitti.

[1] Shashâmka's alleged persecution of Buddhism is held to be "not proven" in the writings of R. D. Banerji.

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CHAPTER XII.

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE PEOPLE OF BENGAL UNDER THE PÂLAS.

SECTION I.—THE PÂLA-CHOLA PERIOD OF HINDU IMPERIALISM (9TH TO 13TH CENTURY A.D.).

RECENT researches of Indian scholars in the mediæval history of Eastern and Southern India from archæological, linguistic, religious and other standpoints have unearthed important facts of Bengal and Tamil antiquities which demand prominent recognition in the standard works on Indian culture-history. The Pâlas and Cholas of mediæval India can no longer be treated as subordinate or petty princes ruling over the "smaller kingdoms" in one of the so-called periods of disintegration[1] which Indian history is said to repeat after every epoch of consolidation; but must be ranked as by no means inferior in prestige, titles, pretensions, influences and achievements to the famous Vardhanas of the seventh century A.D., the Guptas of the fourth-fifth century A.D., and the Mauryas of the fourth-third century B.C. Dharmapâla (*c.* A.D. 800), the Buddhist Emperor of Eastern India, with his immediate predecessors and successors as well as Râjendra Chola (1018-35), the great

[1] It need be noted that such periods of disintegration have been repeated in the history of every people. *Vide* the section on "Comparative Chronology and Comparative History" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes*.

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Shaiva monarch of the South, with his predecessors and successors, constitute two remarkable contemporary imperial families, which must have a place by the side of such renowned Indian Napoleons, empire-builders and statesmen as Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka the benevolent "Cæsaro-papist," Samudragupta, Chandragupta the Gupta Vikramâditya, and Harṣavardhana, who had preceded them in solving the same problems of administration, commerce, religion and culture on the stage of Hindusthan. The drama of Indian history should, therefore, have its first act closed not at the middle of the seventh century with the passing away of the Vardhanas from Kanauj and Upper India, but really at the end of the twelfth century (1193) with the overthrow of the successors of the Pâlas in Eastern India by a lieutenant of Muhammad Ghori, and about the beginning of the fourteenth century (1310) with the overthrow of the successors of the Cholas by a lieutenant of Ala-ud-din Khiliji.

The Hindu period of Indian history does not end with Harṣavardhana (seventh century) and the subjugation by Mussalmans of certain Rajput States in Western India in the tenth and eleventh centuries. For the social expansion, religious assimilation, commercial progress, and imperial achievements which we are wont to associate with the brightest eras of Hindu national culture, were going on in Eastern and Southern Hindusthan, free and unhampered as of yore, along the natural lines of progressive evolution, up till the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, while the buffer-princes of Lahore, Delhi, Ajmere, Kanauj, Malwa and Gujrat were performing their duties as, by position, the gate-keepers of India against the inroads of aggressive Islam. The period of the mighty Pâlas and Cholas and their successors has witnessed the solution of

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problems which are of paramount importance in Indian history, literature, fine arts, philosophy and religion; because it was during this age that the ocean of Tantrism finally swallowed up in a common philosophy the divergent channels of Mahâyâna Buddhism and latter-day Brâhmaṇism, that Vaiṣṇavism and Shaivaism, the corner-stones of modern Hindu life, received the official stamp, the parents of present-day vernaculars were encouraged and protected, noble religious edifices were built, huge sea-like tanks were excavated, magnificent images were sculptured in bronze and stones, the navigation of the sea was pushed forward, commercial and cultural intercourse between the Southerners and Easterners was promoted, and India became really the school of Asia by supplying faith, literature, arts, and material necessaries to Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan, Java, Burma and other lands beyond the seas. This period does in fact carry forward and develop the impulses, aspirations and tendencies of Hindu life testified to by the Chinese master of law in Harṣavardhana's time.

The Pâlas (780-1175) and Cholas (900-1300) are really the spiritual successors of the great empire-builder and statesman of the seventh century; the epoch of their hegemony in Indian history is a brilliant sequel to the splendid epoch of imperialism, religious toleration and eclecticism, colonizing activity and social amalgamation which it had been the policy of the great Harṣa to pioneer and direct. Their services to the making of Indian national culture deserve the same meed of homage, therefore, from historians as those of Harṣa. And now that excavations, explorations, reading and interpretation of old vernacular manuscripts, copper-plate inscriptions, and numismatics, study of folk-lore, folk-songs, folk-arts, and village traditions, evidences of Sanskrit

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literature, old sculptures and paintings, call up before us a picture of political and religious life, commercial and social intercourse, art development, and literary progress no less definite and clear than what we have for any other period of Indian history, the necessity of looking upon the Pâla-Chola[1] period as the really last phase of Imperialism in Hindu India cannot be too strongly advocated.

Section II.—Submergence of Buddhism.

Anarchy and revolutions in Bengal and Northern India.

Northern India was agitated by anarchy and revolutions from the middle of the seventh down to the beginning of the eighth century. During the early years of the eighth century it was subjugated by Yashovarman of Kanauj. Though this suppressed anarchy in other parts of Northern India, yet it was now that political troubles gathered over Magadha and Gauda-Pundra (Bengal).

The epic, *Gauda-vadha*, by Vâkpati.

The conquest of Gauda by Yashovarman furnished to the poet Vâkpati the theme of his epic, *Gauda-vadha* (lit. The Murder of Gauda, i.e. the king of Gauda), in Prâkrit language. From this we learn simply that Yashovarman killed the king of Gauda and conquered it; but we are left in the dark as to how long or if at all the country submitted to his yoke.

Efforts to re-establish Vedic regulations.

It is believed that a little after this conquest, Gauda was under the rule of Âdishura, or Jayanta (*c.* 730), when the tide of Buddhism almost overflowed the country. The Shura kings made the first effort to

[1] Since the above was written Mr. Vincent Smith has in the third edition of his *Early History* (1914) admitted the claims of the Pâlas for "remembrance as one of the most remarkable of Indian dynasties," and as having made "Bengal one of the great powers of India". He has also drawn prominent attention to the achievements of the Gurjara-Pratihâras of Kanauj (816-1194).

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re-establish Vedic religion, and are by tradition known to have brought down some Vedic Brâhmaṇas from Kanauj, and with their help promulgated the Vedic rites and ceremonies throughout the circle of Gauda. These Brâhmaṇas, five in number, settled in Gauda and did all they could to make the people bow again to Vedic rules and injunctions. Their task became rather easy from the fact that the king himself followed the Vedic practice. The authenticity of this tradition is disputed by scholars.

Mâtsya Nyâya, or "State of Nature," as understood by Hooker and Spinoza.

Bengal had to submit to three more foreign invasions from the east, the west, and the south, in succession. Besides, the whole region was divided among a number of smaller Vedist and Buddhist princes who were engaged in a perpetual struggle with one another. The majority of the people, however, seem to have been Buddhists. They were engaged in a sort of continual warfare with the Vedists. "Mâtsya Nyâya" (the logic of Mâtsya, i.e. fish, implying the destruction of the weaker by the stronger) or the struggle for existence was at this time the characteristic of the people in Eastern India. The condition of the country was almost anarchic, there being no strong ruler; or, if there were any, his attention was wholly absorbed in stamping out internal dissensions. The consequence was that the strong oppressed the weak with impunity and there was a veritable "state of nature". The following lines from Vasu's *Banger Jâtîya Itihâsa* (The History of Bengal Castes), Vaishya kânda (Chapter on the Vaishyas), Vaishya kula parichaya (Account of the several Vaishya families), mirror forth the actual condition of the country at this time :—

> "The throne is vacant, there being no king at the helm of affairs :
> Life and property are at the mercy of whoever can take them."

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Kingship by popular election.

To check the headlong current of this anarchy the people of Bengal offered their throne to Gopâla, an elderly military genius among themselves. He became the first king of Gauda by virtue of popular election (*c.* 785).

The Neo-Hindu Cults.

The Brâhmaṇas alleged to have been brought by the Shura king had established the Vedic and Purâṇic forms of Hinduism in Gauda, and prior to that some had firmly embraced the Shaiva cult. Phanibhuṣaṇa Lokeshwara and Târâ and the other Shaktis of the Buddhists had already become incorporated with the gods of the Hindu pantheon. Lokeshwara, sitting under the bodhi tree, looked exactly like Shiva sitting under the marmelos tree, and was actually receiving homage as such. The Shaivas and the Tantrists worshipped Maheshwara and Lokeshwara alike.

From this time forward the Shaiva, the Shâkta and the Saura cults began to impress their influence upon the conduct of the Buddhist idolators. Buddhist influence was in fact dying out; the Mahâyânists and Hindus of the Shaiva and other cults being almost equally addicted to Tantrism.

Gopâla was succeeded by his son, Dharmapâla (795-830), on the throne of Gauda. The new king established the Vikramashilâ monastery in Magadha (present Behar Province). There is no means of knowing if he established any in Gauda; at least there are no relics of them extant, even if he did. It was about this time that Jetârimuni, son of prince Sanâtana of Varendra (North Bengal), entered the order of Buddhist Bhikṣus. He founded a satra (a place where food is supplied to the poor or pilgrims without cost) in the Vikramashilâ Vihâra (monastery).

Dharmapâla was a Buddhist of the Mahâyâna school, but allowed his subjects full freedom as to their religious

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principles. His chief general, Nârâyaṇa Varman, installed an idol of Nârâyaṇa (Viṣṇu) at a place named Shubhasthali. The Vedic and Purâṇic ceremonies were thus practised without opposition. The king was anxious to please his subjects without distinction of creed. Hence it was that Buddhism could not gain ground, or even hold its own, against its ostentatious and tolerated rivals. Jainism also was at a low ebb in Gauda during the reign of Dharmapâla. He was an enemy of Âmarâja, a Jaina king; hence the influence that Buddhism had could not be exerted by the creed of the latter. In the twenty-sixth year of his reign was installed an idol of the four-faced Mahâdeva not far off from the Mahâbodhi tree of Gayâ.

Image of Nârâyaṇa.

Idol of Mahâdeva.

On the death of Dharmapâla, his second son Devapâla (830-65) ascended the throne of Gauda. The Vedic Brâhmaṇas had monopolized the office of prime minister of the Pâla Emperors. This threw open the doors of the royal house to the gradual influx of the Hindu influence. Devapâla looked upon his Brâhmaṇa Premier with great respect and esteem. For this reason Hari Mishra has greatly eulogized him in his *Kârikâ* (a poem consisting of expository stanzas).

Brâhmanic influence.

Ghanarâma Pandit has said in his *Dharmamangala* that the line of the Pâla kings was descended from the God of Ocean. Here he had not drawn on his imagination, for such a tradition had long been current in the country. Ghanarâma says :—

"King Dharmapâla is a pious ruler. Of good descent and high character, he is like the kalpataru (a fabulous wishing-tree that gives whatever is begged of it) of this Kali or Iron Age."

"His son, Gaudeshwara, is born of the spirit of God. For his piety and indomitable energy, he is praised by the whole world."

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"What shall I say of him, who is devoted to his faith, rules the earth and has descended from the Ocean, who has the Moon for his friend?." The Ocean-God.

It is this Devapâla who is the Ocean's son in the *Kârikâ*. In *Râma-Charita* (*c.* 1080), by Sandhyâkara Nandi, also, the Pâla family has been said to have been descended from the same source.[1] It was belief in this tradition that may have led the Pâla kings to practise Hindu rites and customs.

The Pâla kings were gradually entertaining greater respect for the Brâhmaṇas and the Brâḥmaṇic religion. In the inscription on the Garuda-stambha (pillar) we have: "Shurapâla was like Indra himself, and was a favourite of the people". Kedâra Mishra was his adviser and prime minister. He was an orthodox Vedic Brâhmaṇa, the great-grandson of the first Premier of the Pâla House.

Some coins with the name of Vigrahapâla have been found. These are like the coins of the fire-worshipping Sassanian royal family of Persia. The altar of fire-worship of the Sassanians and the effigies of the sacrificial priest, and of Adhvaryu (priest proficient in the Yajurveda) on its either side lead us to suspect that Vigrahapâla, *alias* Shurapâla, was a fire-worshipper, i.e. followed the Vedic practices.

Kedâra's son, Gurava Mishra, the prime minister of Nârâyaṇapâla, set up the pillar of Garuda, the bird-vehicle of Viṣṇu. We learn from a stanza in a copper-plate granted by Nârâyaṇapâla, that the Pâshupata religion (i.e. the view that inculcated the worship of

[1] Like the contemporary Gurjara-Pratihâra Emperors of Kanauj, the Pâlas of Eastern India must be ethnologically traced to Tartar or Mongol (Saka, Kushan, Hun) factors in Indian population. See the section on "Tartarisation of Aryanised Dravidians" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes*.

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Pashupati, i.e. Shiva)[1] also obtained unopposed in the country about this time.

The temple of Sahasrâyatana.

"(This piece of land is set apart by) Emperor Nârâyaṇapâla, after having established the temple of Sahasrâyatana, for meeting the expenses of duly worshipping Shiva Bhattâraka, who has been installed there, of offering sacrifices and oblations of rice, milk and sugar, boiled together, to him, and of giving away food to the poor and the needy in his honour; for supplying beds, seats, food and medicines to the body of the priests of Pashupati and for the discharge of the menial work that they may require; and also for the due maintenance, according to the allotment devised by himself, of those persons who follow the grantor's faith."

From this inscription on the copper-plate we get an idea of the deep root that Shaivaism had struck in Gauda. Although a staunch Buddhist himself, yet Nârâyaṇapâla endowed lands for the service of Shiva. The objects of the endowment are clearly set forth—the due worship, etc., of Shiva Bhattâraka, the supply of beds, etc., to the priests of Pashupati, and the due maintenance of those other persons who were of the grantor's (Emperor's) faith. This shows unmistakably that Nârâyaṇapâla founded temples of Shiva for promulgating the Pâshupata view, while he made arrangements for the gratification of his subjects of other creeds as well. Thus, while arrangements were made for the worship of Shiva Bhattâraka in these temples, provision was made at the same time for supplying beds, etc., to the Buddhists as well as to the priests of Pashupati; and, that these might not have occasion for quarrelling with one another, he also defined their respective rights and shares.

[1] A bronze image of Pârvatî, the wife of Shiva, was set up in the fifty-fourth year of this reign.

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In previous times the Buddhist kings established Vihâras or monasteries, where they installed the idols of Lokeshwara and Târâ, and made provision for the food, beds, etc., of the Buddhist priests. During the reign of Nârâyaṇapâla (*c.* 875-930), however, no Buddhist Vihâras seem to have been built, but instead were built the temples of Shiva, wherein were installed the idol of Maheshwara with the look of Lokeshwara. These temples, it might be noticed, had a peculiarity of their own. Although dedicated to Shiva, arrangements were made here for the residence and maintenance of Hindus and Buddhists alike. Further, the Buddhist festivals were observed here ; and persons of all creeds gathered on the occasions of the Shaiva festivities, which were accompanied with dance and music. Provision was made also for supplying food and drink to the guests.

The temple of Shiva an imitation of the Buddhist vihâra.

It was thus that while, on the one hand, materials were furnished for the growth and development of the Shaiva Gambhîrâ, on the other hand, the death-knell of Buddhism as a separate creed was rung.

It must be noticed, however, that although the Shaiva influence is predominant in the Gambhîrâ, yet institutions and observances of the Buddhist Tantric school form its backbone. The influence exercised by the Brâhmaṇa ministers of the Pâla kings helped Shaivaism in the displacement of Buddhism, which gradually became merged in the former. The Pâla dynasty owed its political legitimacy to the "election" by the Folk, and it was the Folk that dominated the age in matters of faith.

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Section III.—Establishment of Shaivaism in Bengal (Eleventh Century).

It was before the time of the Pâla dynasty that Shaivaism had struck roots in Bengal. But it was under this dynasty that the predominant voice of the Brâhmaṇa ministers enhanced its influence and established Hinduism over Buddhism. More especially during the reign of Nârâyaṇapâla Shaivaism gained an extensive hold upon the minds of the people. Buddhism was being driven out of Bengal, and what remained of it was so simply in name, the substance becoming gradually identified with Shaivaism. In the copper-plate injunction issued by him, Nârâyaṇapâla ordered that "the Châtas (thieves) and Bhâtas (lit. panegyrists, hence cheats) should be prevented from carrying on their depredations within the limits of the country administered by the priests of Pashupati". It may be inferred that previous to the issue of the order some sect or sects oppressed the Shaivas, and that this oppression was thus put an end to by royal proclamation. Being protected from opposition and its course made smooth, the Shaiva creed gradually spread over the whole territory of the Pâla kings.

Religious transformation.

The earlier kings of the Pâla dynasty were personally staunch Buddhists. But in later times kings of this line are found to have yielded to the Shaiva and the Vaiṣṇava creeds. The country had in the meanwhile witnessed a religious revolution to which the rulers had to adapt themselves.

In his edition of the *Shunya Purâṇa*, Vasu gives the following picture of the religious transformation in Eastern India :—

"About the time of Dharmapâla (*c.* 800), the whole of North and East India witnessed the successive rise and

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fall of various sects. Jainism gained the day where only a short while before the Vedic religion had swayed the minds of the people. In the same way, within a very short time, Hinduism was found to have risen out of the ashes of Jainism and to have enlisted the public sympathy on its side. The place which was once the scene of sacrifices, from which sacred smoke rose up in curls and overcast the heavens, and which resounded with the recitations of Vedic hymns, was found a short while after to have been transformed into a dismal scene, where the sacrifices of animals before the various terrific images of Mahâkâla, worshipped by the Tantric Buddhists, became the order of the day."

In an age of such religious transitions, Hinduism became ultimately established through the influence of the Brâhmaṇa ministers of the Pâla kings. The Tantric form of Buddhism was similar to that of Shaivaism, Lokeshwara and Târâ of the former being simply shadows of Shiva and Durgâ of the latter. Hence it was easy for Tantric Buddhism to lose itself in Shaivaism; and the consequence of this was that the Shaiva and the Shâkta creed commanded the religious devotion of the people.

Râjyapâla "had tanks excavated and wells sunk as bottomless as the ocean, and had temples built the rooms of which were as high as a mountain". He was probably a nominal emperor; as about the middle of the tenth century the northern districts of the Pâla Empire came under Kâmboja (Mongolian) rule, and the western were overrun by the Gurjaras of Kanauj. It was Mahîpâla I (*c.* 980-1026) who succeeded in establishing a Second Pâla Empire. Archæological evidences indicate that the "barbarian" Kambojas accepted the Shaiva faith of the people, and that Mahîpâla, who was tolerant of all creeds, had a Brâhmaṇa Premier.

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Atisha, *alias* Dipamkara, born in Vikramapura (East Bengal), was an adept in the Buddhist Tantric practices, and gained the title of Shrîjnâna. He was appointed the spiritual Head (Âchâryya) of the Vikramashilâ monastery. Nayapâla (*c.* 1026-45), patron of the physician Chakrapâṇi Datta, looked upon him as almost a god. Through the efforts of Shrîjnâna and the encouragement of Nayapâla, the Tantric view obtained now over the whole of Gauda. Even from far-off countries like Tibet scholars came in numbers to Vikramashilâ to obtain instructions of the Tantric school. Hindus and Buddhists were alike eager to worship goddess Târâ (divine energy) and to learn the esoteric practices. People in those days looked upon this Târâ as a Hindu goddess. Shiva and Shakti were then receiving worship throughout the country. Dipamkara's view of Buddhism had much in common with the Hindu Tantrism. In fact, Buddhism lingered on only in name —all its institutions, nay, even its deities, having become already incorporated with those of Hinduism.

Dipamkara Shrîjnâna and Tantrism.

Under these circumstances it became almost impossible for the people to mark out the line of demarcation between Buddhism and Shaivaism. The former lost itself in and added to the development of the latter. Even for the propitiation of Buddha, grants of land were made to Brâhmaṇas. Mahîpâla was a Buddhist ; still, on the day of the sun's passage from Libra to Scorpio or from Aries to Taurus, he performed his ablution in the Ganges and made grants of land to Brâhmaṇas in the hope and belief of thus securing the good-will of Buddha. During his reign there was little or no distinction between Hindus and Buddhists. The current of Buddhism was fast emptying itself into Hinduism and feeding the stream of Shaivaism, which had about this time established itself over Bengal.

Eclecticism of Mahîpâla.

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Rāmapāla sets up Shaiva temples.

The Pâla kings had begun to establish temples of Shiva. The famous Râmapâla[1] (*c.* 1060-1100) had a tank dug as vast as a lake, and close by it three huge temples of Shiva built where idols of the god were also duly installed. Many Hindu and Buddhist temples of this nature were established in the town of Râmâvatî (present village of Amriti in the district of Malda?), his new capital. Here were towering temples with the images of Avalokiteshwara, Lokeshwara and other Buddhist gods. The form of this Lokeshwara was like that of Shiva, and adorned in the same manner with ornaments of snakes. In the great Vihâra of Jagaddala at Râmâvatî also there was at this time installed the idol of Lokeshwara Buddha. In the eyes of the common people of this time, Shiva and Lokeshwara looked exactly alike and passed for the same god. Both the Shaivas and the Buddhists of the time were followers of the Tantric school, and the figure of the Buddhist Bhairava passed generally for that of the Hindu Shiva. Owing to this popular confusion, many a Buddhist temple was losing its distinctive denominational character.

And it was now that Târâ and Âryya Târâ were taking their seats as Âdyâ Devî on the left side of Shiva. There is a report to the effect that Buddha first entrusted to Shiva the task of protecting his religion from the violation of the Sakas; but, when Shiva was found unequal to it, Buddha transferred the duty to Châmundâ.

[1] During the latter half of the eleventh century Bengal passed through what may be called a period of Triarchy (or Three Independent Kingdoms). The Pâlas were rulers in the North, the Varmans in the East, and the Senas in the West. By the beginning of the twelfth century the Senas had made themselves masters of a United Bengal and pushed their arms into Assam, Orissa, and Bihar; and they maintained the hegemony of their dynasty throughout the century till its close, when they fell before Moslem attacks.

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It is clear that Buddhism was gradually passing into Shaivaism.

The Pâla kings compared to Chandra-shekhara Shiva.

Shaivaism became well established in Râmâvatî and Gauda, the capital cities, and this led to the general adoption of its practices throughout the country. In the similes applied to the Pâla kings, the influence of Shaivaism is clearly marked. In the copper-plate granted by Madanapâla (*c.* 1110) we find the following line :—

"Of Vigrahapâla was begotten Mahipâla, as glorious as Chandra-shekhara Shiva."[1]

Thus Shaivaism found its way even into the inscriptions of professedly Buddhist rulers. The Pâla Emperors were Buddhists, while their wives became attached to Hinduism. From the above-mentioned copper-plate, we learn that Queen Chitramatikâ had the *Mahâbhârata* recited to her by a certain Brâhmaṇa named Vateshwara Swâmin, and as remuneration granted him a piece of land in the name of Buddha Bhattâraka of divine attributes. Even in the royal zenana Hindu customs were being practised as religiously as in a strict Hindu family. And we have seen, besides, that the difference between Hinduism and Buddhism had already died out. From these facts we may easily infer the trend of the people's socio-religious[2] life. It was this : Shaivaism had overgrown Buddhism ;[3] or, the latter had become identified with the former.

[1] "Like a second Chandra-shekhara Shiva, he had the glorious Mahipâla for his son, whose fame was more fragrant than water mixed with sandalwood powder, and whose glories were sung by the joyous people over the whole world."

[2] For the archæology of the period, see Banerji's *Pâlas of Bengal.*

[3] *Vide* the section on "The Alleged Extinction of Buddhism in India" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes.*

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE TANTRIC LORE OF MEDIÆVAL BUDDHISM.

SECTION I.—MAHÂYÂNIC MYTHOLOGY.

IT was the Buddhists of the Mahâyâna branch that developed what may be called Tantric Buddhism. In course of time a branch shot out from this sect with the tenets of Guhya Dharma (occult religion), and later on another branch under the name of Mantrayâna. From this last also, by and by, there sprang again first Kâlachakra and then Vajrayâna.

In the middle of the seventh century, Hiuen-Thsang found the predominance of Tantrism in Buddhism. For a long while before this the Hînayâna and Mahâyâna sects had been quarrelling with each other. The Shramaṇas of the first sect inveigled against the second, and denounced it clearly as having brought about the ruin of genuine Buddhism.

The Mâdhyamika sect of Mahâyânists first produced religious unification in the country by being the connecting link between Hinduism and Buddhism. It was again this sect that indirectly helped in the downfall of Buddhism. For the Kâlachakra and the Vajrayâna sects that grew out of it caused Buddhism to ultimately lose itself in a Tantrism abounding in ceremonial forms and observances. The compiler of *Sarva Darshana* has assigned Shunyavâda (the theory of the void) as

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The Void.

the kernel of the Mâdhyamika religion. The Mahâyânists have drawn a complex picture of the creation of the Universe by fancying a Mahâ Shunya (great void) beyond and above the Shunya, and again many other things beyond it.

The Âdi Buddha.

The Shramaṇas of the Mahâyâna sect have discussed the theory of creation after the manner of the Hindu Purânists. They have replaced the formless Maheshwara—of the form of the void—by an Âdi (First) Buddha and with his help have thrown open the door to the realm of creation. They have traced the visible universe from this Âdi Buddha, an embodiment of "the absolute void".

The Buddhas, the Shaktis and the Bodhisattvas.

The Mahâyânists have taken pains to establish the antiquity of their religious view by tracing it through many Dhyânî Buddhas like Brahmâ, Viṣṇu, Maheshwara and the other Hindu Purâṇic gods, to the Âdi or Original Buddha, who is "all void," the state that existed before the universe came into being. Nay, not content with this, they have even fancied Shaktis (personified energies and wives) to these Buddhas and have thus made their pantheon a complex one. And to make it more complex, they have created Bodhisattvas[1] out of those ascetics who have, by virtue of their meditation and devotion, become entitled to the attainment of the real state of Buddha. Thus we have got three orders of divinities—the Buddhas, the Buddha Shaktis and the Bodhisattvas—which have given diversity to mediæval Buddhism.

We give below a list[2] of the several Buddhas, Buddha Shaktis and the Bodhisattvas :—

[1] The being that acquires Bodhi (i.e. the knowledge that confers the state of Buddha, "the Enlightened") is so called, i.e. a Buddha *in posse.*

[2] *Vide* Getty's *Gods of Northern Buddhism*, pp. 25, 42, 102.

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Dhyânî Buddha.	*Buddha-Shakti.*	*Bodhisattva.*
(1) Vairochana	Vajradhâtwiswarî	Samantrabhadra
(2) Aksobhya	Lochanâ	Vajrapâṇi
(3) Ratna Sambhava	Mâmakî	Ratnapâṇi
(4) Amitâbha	Pândarâ	Padmapâṇi Avalokiteṣhwara
(5) Amogha Siddhi	Târâ	Vishwapâṇi

Human Buddhas.

According to Mahâyânism men can gradually rise, by virtue of their spiritual culture, to the attainment of the state of gods. Men who have thus attained the state of Buddha are said to be "Human Buddhas," and the names of seven such Buddhas are found on record. These are—Vipashyi, Sikhî, Vishwabhu, Krakuchhanda, Kanakamuni, Kâshyapa and Shâkyamuni.

Thus the Buddhist pantheon was growing in extent with the addition of Buddhas, Buddha-Shaktis and Bodhisattvas. After the manner of the Purâṇic Hindus who had managed to raise the number of the Vedic gods from thirty-three to as many crores (1 crore = 10 millions), the Buddhist gods also were multiplied considerably. The imitation did not stop there. Like Hindu gods, the Buddhist ones also had their images made and installed.

Section II.—The Common Factor[1] in Neo-Hinduism and Neo-Buddhism.

(*a*) *Bodhisattvas.*

The importance of Avalokiteshwara.

A Buddhist god, named Avalokiteshwara,[2] was held in special esteem among the Buddhists of the Mahâyâna

[1] See the chapter on "Sino-Japanese Buddhism and Neo-Hinduism" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes.*

[2] *Vide* Getty's *Gods of Northern Buddhism*, pp. 54-55, etc. An analysis of the attributes and forms of all the Bodhisattvas would indicate that the features of the neo-Hindu deities, Brahmâ, Visṇu, and Shiva, can be ascribed to one or other of these. This explains why the mind of mediæval India was fast obliterating the distinctions between Mahâyânism and Purâṇism.

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sect. It is questionable if Buddha himself ever received the same amount of homage at their hands. Fa Hien as well as Hiuen-Thsang saw many an image of this Avalokiteshwara. This god with two others named Prajnâ-pâramitâ and Manjushrî, exercised undisputed sway from Muttra and Central India to Bihar and Bengal. Even Emperor Harṣa himself is known to have offered prayers to Bodhisattva Avalokiteshwara.[1] From the account of Hiuen-Thsang we learn that a large number of the images of this god were standing about the celebrated Bodhi tree of Gaya. The Buddhists of Eastern India remembered this god and offered prayers to him and begged his grace while taking their seats, sitting down to dinner or going to bed. Nâlandâ also abounded with images of this god. Inside the Vihâra here, exactly in the centre, was an image of his, of short stature, holding a lotus flower in full bloom in his hand, and aloft on his head, and enshrouded by his hair, the figure of Amitâbha Buddha. People in general held this idol in great esteem and reverence.

The location of Amitâbha Buddha on the head of the image of Avalokiteshwara reminds the Hindus of and makes them hold it to be the figure of Shamkara (Shiva) holding on his head the goddess Gamgâ.

In *Sâdhana-mâlâ Tantra* Khasarpana Lokeshwara has been described as "having an effulgent body like crores of moons, with long matted hair on his head, on which, like the crown, is seated Amitâbha. He is decorated with all sorts of ornaments, and is lying down on a sofa placed above the moon, which is in its turn placed on a lotus representing the universe. He has a

[1] See Waddell's *Indian Buddhist Cult of Avalokita and his Consort Târâ the Saviouress* in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (London, 1894).

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smiling face and is twice eight years old. His right hand is in the posture of pronouncing benediction and in the left he is holding a lotus with the stalk. He is jovial with the use of nectar streaming down from his palms. Below him is the glorious Potalaka, who dwells in the Achalodara, whose face is turned upwards, who has a large belly and is very lean, whose complexion is very white, who has an elongated face, whose eyes are genial with kindness, who is intoxicated with the passion of love, but is very calm, and who is decorated with various ornaments. Behind him is Târâ and on his right-hand side is Sudhanvâ Kumâra. Here Târâ is shyâma (of dark complexion), holding a lotus with the stalk in her left hand and displaying the palm of her right adorned with various ornaments and bending down, as it were, under the weight of a pair of breasts revealing her blooming youth. Sudhanvâ Kumâra, again, is standing with folded hands. His complexion is like that of gold. He is of the form of Kumâra (Kârtikeya, the god of war) and adorned with all sorts of ornaments and holding a book under his left arm-pit. On the west is Bhrikuti and on the north Hayagrîva. Here Bhrikuti is represented as having four hands and three eyes, of golden complexion and with matted hair on his head. He is holding a tridandi (it should properly be tridanda, three staves, representing the control of thought, speech and action, the person who carries these staves being called tridandi) and a Kamandalu (water-pot, such as the ascetics carry) in his left hand, and in his right is carrying a rosary of beads showing the attitude of prayer. Hayagrîva is crimson-coloured and of short stature. He has a long belly, the bright upturned hair of his head is reddish brown, and a snake is representing his sacred thread. The complexion of his beard is more reddish brown. . . .

Paraphernalia of Mahâyânist Pantheon.

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He has three eyes, and all of them are red and circular and his eyebrows are contracted as if in a frown. He is clothed in a tiger's skin and holds a club as weapon (in his left hand), the right hand being set in the attitude of prayer. All these are standing ready and prompt to follow up the slightest hints through the eyes of their master."

From the above we learn that Khasarpana Lokeshwara or Avalokiteshwara is as effulgent as ten million moons; and amidst the locks of matted hair on his head is seated the image of Amitâbha. Avalokiteshwara is seated in the particular posture known as Padmâsana (in which the statues of Buddha are invariably represented) and is about sixteen years old. Close by him Sudhanvâ Kumâra is standing with folded hands. He has a golden complexion and a large belly. On the right-hand side is the goddess Târâ in the full bloom of youth. She is crimson coloured and is holding a blue lotus in her left hand. On the west in the standing posture is Bhrikuti of three eyes and four hands and with a profusion of matted hair on his head. He is holding a tridanda and a kamandalu in his hands. And crimson-coloured Hayagrîva of a long belly and three eyes, clad in a tiger's skin and wearing a snake as his sacred thread, is standing on the north.

The Ârya Avalokiteshwara and the Khasarpana Lokeshwara.

From these descriptions we get a glimpse into the Tantric pantheon of Buddhism. Târâ, Bhrikuti, Hayagrîva and the like seem to be the courtiers of Avalokiteshwara. In the treatise known as *Sâdhana-mâlâ Tantra* detailed accounts are to be found of the Ârya Avalokiteshwara and the Khasarpana Lokeshwara. These are but two names of one and the same deity.[1] The Mahâyâna sect used to worship all these gods.

[1] And some have clearly applied the name "Khasarpana-Avalokiteshwara".—Das's *Indian Pundits in the Land of Snow*, p. 18.

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In some places images of this beautiful Lokeshwara god are found with four hands and three eyes.

The form in which Lokeshwara Buddha is contemplated.

In Mayurbhanj, according to Vasu, Lokeshwara has four hands and three eyes. He has matted hair on his head from amidst which a moon shines. Snakes form the ornaments on his person. In two of his hands he holds a rosary and a Kamandalu, and the other two are raised by way of cheering the votaries and granting them boons. He is seated in the particular posture known as Padmâsana under the Bodhi tree.

This form of Lokeshwara, it must be said, is a distinct copy of the Hindu god Mahâdeva. The Tantric Buddhists installed such images of Lokeshwara, offered worship to him and held festivities in his honour.

In Buddhist temples is to be found the image of Manjushrî[1] on the right-hand side of the idol of Avalokiteshwara. We quote below the description that is given of him in *Sâdhana-mâlâ Tantra* :—

The form in which Manjushrî has to be contemplated.

"One's own self (identical with the god on whom it is concentrated—in this case Manjushrî) is to be contemplated as of yellow complexion, performing the Vyâkhyâna mudrâ (a sign made by intertwining the fingers of both the hands in religious worship) and adorned with jewels. He wears a crown set with gems and is holding a lotus in his left hand. He is seated on a throne with the image of Akṣobhya placed on the crown of his head. On his right hand is standing with folded hands Sudhanvâ Kumâra, sprung from the Vîja (a mystic syllable representing a deity and symbolizing his powers) of Hoom, resplendent with various ornaments, wearing a jewelled crown and holding under his arm-pit a book dealing with all religions. On the left is Jamâri of dark complexion, sprung from the Vîja of Hoom, of disfigured face and upturned and tawny coloured hair, holding a

[1] *Vide* Getty, p 95.

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club in his hand and bedecked with jewels. To his south and north are standing Chandra-prabhâ and Surya-prabhâ respectively. In the east is Vairochana, in the west Ratna-sambhava, in the north Amitâbha, and in the south Amoghasiddhi. And in the south-east and the three other corners are Lochanâ, Mâmakî, Pândarâ and Târâ."

Buddhists worshipped Manjushrî of this description and attended by all these Buddhist idols. Manjushrî of yellow complexion and seated on the throne; lovely Sudhanvâ-Kumâra with a book under his arm-pit; Jamâri of disfigured face and dark complexion, and Vairochana, Ratna-Sambhava, Amitâbha and Amogha-siddhi, as well as Lochanâ, Mâmakî, Pândarâ and Târâ; this host of Mahâyânic deities was more or less parallel to, and could be easily assimilated with, the prevailing Purâṇic gods and goddesses.

(*b*) *Târâ.*

The image of the goddess Târâ is generally found on the left side of that of Lokeshwara of three eyes and four hands, of white colour, with a profusion of matted hair on the head and seated under the Bodhi tree. In many Buddhist Vihâras these images were installed. Although the ordinary place of Târâ is on the left side of Lokeshwara, yet in some places her image has been found on his right-hand side. Owing to different names this Târâ is found to be divided into several classes such as—Nîla Saraswatî Târâ, Âryâ Târâ, Jangalî Târâ, Vajra Târâ, etc. The female figure named as Nîla Saraswatî Târâ is held in deep reverence by the Yogâchâra sect of Tibet. The following description is found of this Saraswatî in *Swatantra Tantra*:—

Târâ Nîla Saraswatî.

"On the western side of Meru (Pamir) is the great lake of Cholana where was born Nîla Saraswatî Târâ."[1]

[1] Archæological Survey of Mayurbhanj.

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The figure of Târâ was held in great esteem among the Mahâyânists. Hiuen-Thsang saw one such image in the monastery of Nâlandâ, where worship was offered and festivities held with great pomp. He took care to leave an account of this idol. Ârya Târâ alias Mahâ Târâ.

"To the north of a figure of Buddha—2 or 3 li, in a Vihâra, constructed of brick—is a figure of Târâ Bodhisattva. This figure is of great height and its spiritual appearance very striking. Every fast-day of the year large offerings are made to it. The kings and ministers and great people of the neighbouring countries offer exquisite perfumes and flowers, holding gem-covered flags and canopies, whilst instruments of metal and stone resound in turns, mingled with the harmony of flutes and harps. These religious assemblies last for seven days."

An under-current of the Gambhîrâ festivities is found on observation to be stealthily flowing beneath the rituals and ceremonials that were observed in connexion with the worship and festival of Târâ. On the day of festival the Buddhists would worship and make offerings to her, and in this kings and ministers and the people generally took part alike. Various kinds of music added to the grandeur of the occasion, and people from the neighbouring countries attended the places in their tens and thousands, and thus the current of festivities rolled on for seven consecutive days—just the number that the Gambhîrâ festival covers. It will thus be seen that in course of time this Ârya Târâ festival passed on into the Shaiva Gambhîrâ.

Jangalî Târâ is similar to Ârya Târâ. The epithet "Jangalî" (lit. relating to a forest) is due to the fact that the Shramaṇas of the Mahâyâna sect worshipped this goddess with two or four hands in the wilderness. Her description is to be found in the follow- Jangalî Târâ.

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ing instruction for contemplation quoted from the Buddhist Tantric treatise, *Sâdhanamâlâ*:—

"She has to be contemplated as of white colour and two or four hands and as being all white, with matted hair on her head as crown. She is clad in white, adorned with white ornaments and white snakes and seated on the couch of truth. Of the four hands the principal two are engaged in playing on a lyre; of the other two the left is holding a white snake and the right is set in the Mudrâ (attitude) of Abhaya (hope and reassurance). She is encircled by a halo resembling the glow of the moon."

Vajra Târâ.

Vajra Târâ was worshipped by the Mahâyânists. It is this goddess who in some parts of India has come to be known as Chandî. In *Sâdhana Samuchchaya*, a treatise on Buddhist Tantrism, the following description is found:—

"She has to be contemplated as seated firm on a moon as throne fixed on a lotus representing the universe, in the centre of the circle of the Mâtrikâs (lit. mothers, sixteen goddesses such as Padmâ, Gaurî, etc.). She has eight hands and four faces of white, dark, yellow and red colours and all turned a little to the left, and furnished with three eyes. She is decorated with all sorts of ornaments. The glow of her complexion is like that of gold and she has a majestic appearance blooming with the signs of maidenhood. The halo of her person is blood-red, and four Buddhas are set on her crown. Close by her is a couch of the thunder-bolt. In three of her right hands are a thunder-bolt, a dart and a snake, and the fourth one is set in the attitude of conferring boons. And on the fore-fingers of the four left hands are a lotus, a bow, a thunder-bolt as a guiding hook (ankusha) and another as a noose."

In the Nepâlese edition of *Sâdhanamâlâ Tantra* the

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following description is found of Kurukullâ Devî, who is also a personified energy of Buddha :— Kurukullâ Devi.

"She has to be contemplated as of crimson complexion, seated on a red lotus and dressed in red. Her crown also is of crimson colour. She has four hands. Of the two left, the upper is set in the attitude of giving assurance and the lower is holding a quiver set with jewels; of the two right the upper one is holding a bow with a set arrow and the lower is pulling to the ear the floral string of an arrow which is also made of the blossoms of the red lotus."

Beside these the pantheon of the Mahâyâna sect contained many other gods and goddesses. The female form of Dharma is also due to their fancy. Figures of Dharma as a goddess have been discovered in the Mahâbodhi of Nepal and Vadasâhi in Mayurbhanj. And as such Dharma has got the names of Prajnâ-pâramitâ, Dharma Devî, Ârya Târâ and Gayeshwarî. She is also known as Âdi Dharma Devî and Âdyâ Devî. It is this Ârya Târâ or Âdyâ Devî in whose honour festivities are held in the present-day Gambhîrâ. The real form of the Buddhist goddess Târâ is to be found in the following quotation from *Swatantra Tantra*:— Ârya, Dharma Devî or Âdyâ Devi, the presiding goddess of the Gambhîrâ.

"She has to be contemplated as three-eyed, of a dark blue hue, and holding in her two hands a lotus and boons. She is surrounded by a number of Shaktis of many forms and diverse colours. She has a smiling face and her ornaments are made of sparkling gems and pearls. Her feet, resembling two full-blown lotuses, are resting on a jewelled footstool."

Again, in *Sâdhanamâlâ Tantra* we meet with the following description of Mahottarî Târâ. "She has to be contemplated as of a dark-blue colour with two hands. Her right is set in the attitude of granting boons and her left is holding the stalk of a glorious lotus. She Mahottarî Târâ.

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is decorated with all sorts of ornaments and is reclining on a sofa made of moons and lotuses."

It will now be clear that the Buddhists were investing with forms, according to their fancies, the gods and goddesses of Tantrism, and devising their suitable forms of worship and festivities. It was this Tantrism that brought about the *rapprochement* of the Mahâyânists with the Purâṇists, whose feminine divinities were analogues or duplicates of these Târâs.

Section III.—Drama and Tantrism.

Nâgânanda (*c.* 640).

From the time of Fa Hien down to that of Hiuen-Thsang, there was a steady spread of the Tantric influence among the followers of Buddhism. In course of time there developed out of Mahâyânism the Mantrayâna and the Vajrayâna sects. The dramatic works of the period testify to the Tantric influence.

The drama *Nâgânanda*, composed during the reign of Emperor Harṣa (seventh century), indicates that Tantrism had become well established in upper India.

Jimutavâhana was a Buddhist while his consort Mâlyavatî was an ideal Shaiva. She worshipped Gaurî of all attributes. On one occasion Jimutavâhana lost his life, but was restored to it through the grace of Shiva and Durgâ (Gaurî). At this time Hiuen-Thsang (629-45) noticed extensive worship and festivities held in honour of gods like Avalokiteshwara, who, however, looked like Shiva in appearance, and also of goddesses like Târâ and Âryya Târâ looking like Gaurî. After this, about the middle of the eighth century, Lalitâditya defeated Yashovarman, King of Kanauj, and took with him to Kashmir the renowned poet Bhavabhuti. It was this poet who was the author of the Sanskrit drama *Mâlatî-Mâdhava*, in which we find clear proofs of the

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sway which Tantrism exercised about that time over the people.

The plot of *Mâlatî-Mâdhava* starts with the spring festival otherwise known as the Madanotsava (Cupid's festival). On one such occasion the scholar Mâdhava saw the minister's daughter Mâlatî passing by on the back of an elephant. Her eyes also fell on him and, as luck would have it, they loved each other at first sight. They were, however, very differently situated, and Mâdhava who could, on no account, aspire to the hands of his beloved, threw himself in despair on the mercy of one Kâmandakî, who was a Buddhist nun. She gave him hopes of a union with the minister's girl, but could not effect this. Now, in greater despair, Mâdhava resolved to take recourse to some Tantric means as likely to be more efficacious in securing Mâlatî. Hard by on the cremation-ground there was a temple dedicated to the service of the goddess Châmundâ, and there was in her service at this time a Bhairavî (a female anchorite who has, according to the Tantric system, dedicated her life to the worship of Bhairava, a name of Shiva), named Kapâla Kundalâ, who wore about her neck what may be called a garland of human skulls. She applied herself to the practice of Tantric rituals on the cremation-ground with raw flesh and the like. Bhairava (masculine of Bhairavî) Aghoraghanta intended to sacrifice a chaste maiden before the goddess and then to sit in meditation on her corpse. And with this purpose in view he managed to bring the minister's girl Mâlatî to the place of cremation in the required guise. Somehow Mâdhava came to have an inkling of his mind and succeeded in taking away the life of Aghora before he could realize his heinous object. He could not, however, find out the whereabouts of his lady-love, and in the course of the search reached the Vindhya hills. Fortune smiles upon him now and

Mâlatî-Mâdhava (*c.* 730).

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here he met a Buddhist nun pursuing the Tantric system. Her name was Saudâminî. And at length through her magic powers and the spiritual strength that she had gained through abstract contemplation, he became united with his Mâlatî. The influence of Tantric Buddhism peeps out through incidents like this ; and under its spell, it will also be noticed, the commandment of Buddhism as to the abstention from killing, nay, dealing cruelly with any creatures, seems to have become a dead letter.

Châmundâ was worshipped by Buddhists of the Tantric school.

Châmundâ also came to be an object of worship with the Buddhists of the Tantric school. In the Tantric scriptures of Buddhism accounts are found of many Buddhist Shaktis. Châmundâ was at this time regarded as a Buddhist goddess. The following description of her is to be found in *Sâradâ-Tilaka* :—

"She has to be contemplated as of blood-red colour, wearing a garland of human heads and holding in her hands a spear, a sword, a human skull and the bone of the forehead." As to her hands, in some places we are told she has eight, in others ten, and in still others sixteen.

Development of the Gambhîrâ.

Thus the deities of Hindu Tantric pantheon were being worshipped by the Tantrists of Buddhism. The practice of worshipping deities sitting on a corpse and the other Tantric rites are akin to the Mashâna dance and the "corpse dance" of the Shaiva Gambhîrâ. The ceremonies of the Gambhîrâ festival bear ample traces of the Tantric influence on it. The Târâ of Buddhist Tantrism is similar in character to the Kâli and Târâ and the other Shaktis of the Hindu Tantrism.[1] Châmundâ also belongs to the same category.

[1] See Nivedità's *Kâli the Mother*, and Avalon's *Principles of Tantra* and other works.

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CHAPTER XIV.

RÂMÂI PANDIT, A FOLK-MINSTREL OF DECADENT BUDDHISM.

Section I.—Tantrism of the Bengalee Buddhist Missionary in Tibet (Eleventh Century).

In the early part of the eleventh century, Tantrism of both the Buddhist and the Shaiva forms obtained unopposed in Gauda. From a study of the life of Atisha Shrîjnâna we may have a glimpse into the Buddhist Tantrism and the socio-religious condition generally of those times. It was Buddhism as practised by Atisha which was the prevailing form of the Buddhist creed in Eastern India. He followed the Vajrayâna and the Mantrayâna divisions of the Mahâyâna branch of Buddhism.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there flourished in Eastern India such Buddhist preceptors and *minnesingers* as Râmâi, Setâi, Nilâi, Kâmsâi, Hâdipâ and Kânipâ; and there were composed such folk-songs as the *Lays of Mahîpâla*, *Lays of Mânikachandra*, and *Lays of Govindachandra*, and the *Shunya Purâṇa* of Râmâi Pandit.

The Bengal of this period presents a good many instances of self-denial and indifference to the world and all it can give. The life of Dipamkara or Shrîjnâna or Atisha (*c.* 1040) is a mirror in which we may see a

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faithful image of Buddhism as it prevailed in this age. It was this religious trend that found expression in later times in the *Shunya Purâṇa* of Râmâi. Indeed, the religious ideal set forth in this work may be said to be a slightly modified form of that which Dipamkara had professed and inculcated.

Meditation on Târâ.

Shrîjnâna worshipped Târâ and in all his doings received his inspiration from her. When it was arranged that he should go to Tibet, with a view to ascertain if he should do this, and to know beforehand if good or evil was likely to accrue from it, he stepped into the temple of the goddess, and, placing before the image a Suvarṇa-mandala (golden orb) as a necessary ingredient of worship, offered prayers to her. Târâ appeared before him in a vision with this instruction: "Go to Mukhen, the resort of pilgrims, which is not far off from Vikramashilâ. There you will meet a female mendicant. Tell her of your wishes and she will give you proper advice."

As was the custom in those days, with a handful of cowries (conch-shells, smallest units of currency) Atisha set out for the temple of Târâ at Vikramashilâ with the object of consulting the Buddhist mendicant. He also carried with him presents for the goddess, including a golden orb. On his arrival there, he placed these articles before the idol and gave the cowries to the Yoginî (female devotee) of the temple. He then consulted her as to the result of his intended visit to Tibet. The female devotee replied that it would be good, but she added that he was to meet his death there.

Worship of Vajra Târâ.

From Vikramashilâ Shrîjnâna prepared to visit Vajrâsana. Âchâryya (preceptor) Janashrî advised him to look for the instructions of a certain Yoginî of the temple of Vajra Târâ on this point. While proceeding accordingly to the above temple he met with a Yoginî

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of resplendent form and consulted her also as to the consequences of his intended visit to Tibet. She also made the same reply as her sister. Then, when he had reached the temple of Vajra Târâ, his wonder knew no bounds on the Yoginî of this place asking him for the handful of cowries which Janashrî had advised him to take with him. But a greater surprise was in store for him, for he soon came to learn that the Yoginî he had encountered on his way was no other than the goddess Vajra Târâ herself.

Atisha took along with him into Tibet Nâgacho, Lochabha, Bhumigarbha, Bhumisamgha, Viryyachandra[1] and a few other natives of Tibet.

On their way they were encountered by a troop of pilgrims who belonged to the Shaiva, the Vaiṣṇava and the Kâpila creeds. These hired a band of eighteen robbers to assassinate Atisha and to plunder his bag and baggage. At the very sight of them he read their minds and uttered some incantation by touching the ground and making gestures with his fingers. This non-plussed the robbers and caused them to be spell-bound. It is reported that it was through the grace of Târâ herself that Atisha became master of this super-natural power.[2]

The Buddhist Tantric process of hypnotism.

On his arrival in Tibet, he performed his ablutions in a tank and went through the ceremony of offering water, etc., to the manes of deceased ancestors. Nâgacho asked what all this meant, and he said he was offering water to the manes of the deceased.[3] He also

[1] Brother of Atisha.—*Indian Pundits in the Land of Snow*, p. 69.

[2] The goddess Târâ is believed to possess the secret of detecting and catching robbers by certain charms.—*Ibid.*, p. 69.

[3] Atisha said that he was offering water to the Pretas.—*Ibid.*, p. 72.

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instructed Nâgacho in the worship of the god Khasarpana.

Supernatural powers attainable by Buddhist Tantrism. Assumption of various forms by the Buddhist yogi.

From this incident in the life of Atisha we get a fair idea of the trend of Buddhism that obtained later in the time of Râmâi Pandit. We learn further that to every temple of Buddhist goddesses was attached a Shramaṇî, or female devotee. We also obtain an idea of the hold that the practice of the Yoga system then had upon the minds of the people from the supernatural powers ascribed to a certain disciple of Atisha. This man, while bidding adieu to his preceptor, took his bag for alms and other articles, and, in order tosh ow his mastery of the yoga practices, he quickly transformed himself into a terrible tiger and devoured a corpse that was lying close by. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, he assumed his own form again and stood before his preceptor. Thereupon Atisha remarked: "Now you can practise what form of worship you like".

Although Tantrists themselves, the Mahâyânists forbade the practice of the Tantric system.

The system of Dharma-worship inculcated by Râmâi Pandit was based on such views of Tantrism, but nowhere did he acknowledge this in words. Dipamkara Shrîjnâna also did not regard his worshipping and offering oblation of water to Lokeshwara, etc., and his art of making the robber spell-bound, as Tantric affairs; for on one occasion Atisha observed before Gyâtson: "Practising the Tantric system is not productive of good to Buddhists, nor is it proper for them".[1]

Section II.—Hindu Elements in Râmâi's Buddhism.

The worship of Triratna-murti was in vogue in Bengal when Râmâi Pandit preached his Dharma worship. The Trimurti (three figures) consisted

[1] Atisha said: "It was not good for a Buddhist priest to have learnt a Tantric charm from a heretic".—*Indian Pundits in the Land of Snow*, p. 70.

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of Buddha, Dharma and Samgha, and was then known as Triratna (three jewels). Prior to this time, Dharma had a female form of sixteen years of age. Gradually, however, this form was discarded, and in a male form Dharma took his seat on the right side of Buddha, while Samgha, as a female, became established on his left.[1] The Original Trimurti.

"Images of the gods and goddesses that were worshipped (during the reign of the Pâla dynasty) have been discovered in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Mention has been made of these deities also in the *Shunya Purâṇa.*"[2] About this time the worship of Mahâdeva, Lokeshwara and Mahâkâla was especially in force among Buddhists of the Tantric school. All of these three gods have received special consideration in the *Shunya Purâṇa.* Images of Mahâkâla have been found among the relics of the Pâla Empire. Hindu Shâktas and Buddhists of the Tantric school alike recognized and provided for the worship of Mahâkâla.

We find that in all the Buddhist Tantric treatises[3] the descriptions of the system of worship, etc., are introduced by a meditation on the Shunya or Void. The Void.
The *Shunya Purâna* of Râmâi also is based on this meditation. It is with the Shunya that he has started his chapter on creation. Prior to creation he has conceived Dharma to have sprung from Shunya; and from this Dharma he has derived the second place

[1] Such a joint image of the Triratna has been discovered in Mahâbodhi at Gaya.—Cunningham's *Mahâbodhi*, p. 55, plate xxvi.

[2] Preface to *Shunya Purâṇa*, published by the Bangîya Sâhitya-Parisad, Calcutta.

[3] *Sâdhanamâla*, *Sâdhanasamuchchayâ*, *Sâdhanakalpalatâ* and other works of the Buddhist Tantric school, the old MSS. on *Chandi*, *Manasâ* and *Jagannâtha Vijaya* and the *Lays of Vâulas* (minstrels) all have references to the Shunya, Dharma, Âdyâ, etc.

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and, one after another, all the other deities, and then he has provided for their worship with that of Dharma. Râmâi has introduced Hindu deities along with the Mahâyânist Triratnamurti and the Shunya. Thus he says :—

Eclecticism in Râmâi's god-lore.

"Bow to the all-powerful Master, who is Niranjana (lit. spotless, hence perfect) and formless."

"By a beautiful process of evolution, He manifested Himself in three forms, which, though different, are but one and the same."

"From a change in the Immutable sprang Dharma of white form. (Thus) Dharma of white complexion assumed a figure."

"'Naw' is the symbol of the worshipful Niranjana, 'Aw' of the worshipful Rambhâ (Shakti), 'Saw' of Viṣṇu, and 'Maw' of Mahâdeva.

"'Maw' and 'Aw' combined means the union of Shiva and Shakti—which destroys fears, which is without a beginning and is the master of Time. Clearly beyond forms and changes is the Shunya, whom the Immortals adore."

Vedic formulæ in *Shunya Purâṇa.*

Deities of the Hindu pantheon are thus mixed up with those of the Buddhist in the *Shunya Purâṇa.* Râmâi's Trimurti is at once Mahâyânic and Purâṇic. The mystic syllable "Om" of the Vedists was also adopted by the mediæval Buddhist *minnesingers.* Râmâi has sung : "The most heinous sins of the household fly away from as far as the sound of "Om" of Dharma reaches" (i.e. the uttering of "Om" destroys all sins).

Not only "Om," but even the Gâyatrî (a short but significant hymn to the Sun representing the Creator, which the Brâhmaṇa repeats silently thrice a day) of Hinduism was gradually adopted by Buddhism, and the following Gâyatrî of Dharma was composed :—

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"Om: Let us meditate on the Siddhadeva (the perfect God), Whose religion is perfect (Siddhadharma), Who is Bhargadeva (the repository of all light and glory), Who is worshipful and upon Whom the mind should be fixed, that He may be pleased to direct our understanding towards the Siddhadharma."

Section III.—The Work of Râmâi as Preacher (Twelfth Century?).

Râmâi introduced the particular form of worship of Dharma known as Dharma's Gâjan. He preached it to all people without distinction of caste or creed, and, as the Buddhist Bhikṣus of yore had done, he travelled from place to place for the propagation of his religion. Thus it is said :— Râmâi travels to preach the worship of Dharma.

"Then, with the object of establishing (the religion of) Dharma throughout the sea-girt earth, Râmâi travelled in various directions. (He declared that) Niranjana (i.e. Dharma) was equally pleased with the worship offered by people of all castes, and thus he tried to establish the religion of Dharma among the thirty-six castes." Râmâi initiates people of all castes.

For the propagation of the worship of Dharma, Râmâi introduced the Dharma-pada, or Dharma-pâdukâ (footprints or sandals of Dharma, also called Buddha-pada), in the place of his image, and enjoined that worship should be offered to it. Thus he says in the course of his own account in his *Shunya Purâṇa*:— Buddha-pada installed by Râmâi.

"I have introduced the footprints, glorious as the lotus, for which reason Niranjana has taken offence with me."[1]

[1] The process of making the Dharma-pâdukâ is to be found in the MS. treatise known as *Dharma-pujâ-paddhati*, referred to several times. There it is said that the picture of a quadrilateral fort with four gates should be drawn with panchagundi (five powders),

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Songs in the *Shunya Purâna.*

The mantras (incantations) of Râmâi's *Shunya Purâṇa* do not really form the details of the worship of Dharma. They were simply sung by the Dharma sannyâsis at the conclusion of every function making up the worship. The *Dharma-pujâ-paddhati* by Râmâi is quite a different treatise. The worship of Dharma was propagated in Bengal by Râmâi in accordance with the system laid down in this work. The songs that were sung during the worship were based on *Shunya Purâṇa.*

Let us now examine the process by which Râmâi evolved his story of creation from the Shunya and introduced the Mantrayâna view regarding the Buddhist deities.

The following are the several chapters of Râmâi's *Shunya Purâṇa*:—

The Contents of *Shunya Purâna.*

(1) Beginning of creation; (2) Deluge; (3) Tikâ-pâvana, or purifying with a mark; (4) Plucking of flowers; (5) Worship of Dharma by Harish-chandra; (6) Inspection of the room; (7) Inspection of the room by Dânapati (master of gifts); (8) Opening of the door; (9) Purifying with the urine of the cow; (10) Putting the sacred mark; (11) Yama-purâṇa, or the legend of Yama, the lord of death; (12) Conversation with the messenger of Yama; (13) Conversation with the lord of death; (14) The Vaitaraṇî (the river Styx of the Hindus); (15) The Place of Dharma; (16) Adhivâsa (ceremony introducing a festival or holy function); (17)

inside which Vâsuki, the King of Serpents, should be represented in the form of a circle. And inside this circle a black tortoise should be drawn, upon the back of which a pair of footprints should be pictured with white sandal-paste. And it is this pair that is known as Dharma-pâdukâ. The modern Dharma-pandits regard this process as the Lâusenî system of Dharma-worship. In Bhotan and adjacent countries this pair of footprints is also known as Dharma-pada as well as Dharma-pâdukâ.

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Vâramati-pujâ: (*a*) Vedâmanui; (*b*) Burning of resin; (*c*) Equipping the horse; (*d*) Vâramâsi; (18) Sandhyâ pâvana; (19) Manui; (20) Dhenkimangalâ; (21) Gambhârî-mangalâ; (22) Ghâta-muktâ; (23) Abode of Dharma; (24) Invocation of shrines; (25) Ablution of Dharma; (26) Dressing of Dharma; (27) Offering of flowers (with the hands joined together); (28) The abode of Gods; (29) Muktâ-mangalâ; (30) Worship of Dharma; (31) Bath of Deliverance; (32) Châla; (33) Breaking of vows; (34) Purifying with the urine of the cow; (35) Putting the sacred mark; (36) Performance of the homa (offering of clarified butter, etc., into the sacred fire) and the sacrifice; (37) The Vaitaraṇî; and (38) The Manui of the Goddess.[1]

Section IV.—The Creation Story in *Shunya Purâna*.

We give below a short account of the Creation story. According to Râmâi there was nothing but the Great Void in the beginning. There was then no God, no heaven, no being, nothing of the vegetable kingdom. Then Dharma Niranjana, "having his mind fixed on the Shunya and depending on the Shunya, reflected: 'What am I, the master of illusions, to create?'" (13).

Dharma springs out of Maha-Shunya, or the Great Void, and assumes a form.

Then sprang Pavana, the wind-god, and of him were begotten the two Anilas. Dharma Niranjana, however, had not embodied himself in a form till now. After the Anilas were born, "the Lord Himself created His own form" (19). Hence "sprang all of a sudden

[1] The functions of "Dharma-sthâna" (or the abode of Dharma), "Performance of the sacrifice," "Tâmradhâraṇa" (holding of copper), "The sacrifice of goats," etc., are found to be observed nowadays. The hymns of *Shunya Purâṇa* are set to music and attended with dance.

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re-birth" (20) from the huge body of the Great Void. Then "from His exhalation was born the bird Ullukai" (26), on the back of which the Dharma Niranjana took his seat.[1]

Thereafter the goose was begotten of the Ulluka. Then came the tortoise.[2] When he was found unable to bear Dharma upon his back, then the latter "took off his sacred thread of gold" and flung it into the waters. From this "sprang into being the serpent Vâsuki of thousand hoods"[3] (94).

Creation of the serpent Vâsuki and of the Earth.

Then the "filth of the body"[4] was placed upon the head of Vâsuki, and this was ultimately converted into the Vasumatî, or earth. Thereafter Dharma Niranjana, with Ullukai, "left the waters and got up on land," and in the course of his travels through the world, "He wiped off the sweat of one side of His body". And "there sprang into being,[5] all of a sudden, the goddess Âdyâ from this sweat". Râmâi has said that "she bears the names of Âdyâ, Durgâ and Jayâ". This Durgâ or primordial energy brought into being the god Kâmadeva (the god of love). All this time Dharma Niranjana was engaged in undivided religious meditation on the banks of the Vallukâ river. As advised by

Goddess Âdyâ is begotten of Dharma.

[1] In the *Rig Veda* the Ulluka has been said to be a messenger of death.

[2] In the poem *Jagannâtha-Vijaya* (Conquest of Jagannâtha) this tortoise has been described as "omniscient" and as "the king of tortoises," and creation has been said to have begun from the Shunya.

[3] This is found in the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta and *The Salutation-Hymns*.

[4] This is said in the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta, *The Songs of Viṣahari* and also in the Gambhîrâ hymns.

[5] This legend is to be found in the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta, in the Gambhîrâ hymns, in *Jagannâtha-Vijaya*, and also in *The Songs of Viṣahari*, etc.

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Durgâ, Kâmadeva went there and, by virtue of his powers, succeeded in disturbing the meditation of Dharma, who felt amorously inclined. Then the latter deposited his seed on a vessel, and, stepping into the temple of Âdyâ with it, said that he was going to the Vallukâ to get a patra (leaf) for her. So he wended his way, leaving, however, his seed, which was mistaken for poison, in the house of Âdyâ. Upon this the goddess thought: "I shall make an end to myself by swallowing the poison" (178). The thought was soon translated into action, and the result was that she became quick with child, and, in due course, one after another came out: "Viṣṇu, by tearing asunder the navel" (185); "Brahmâ, by piercing the crown of the head" (187), and "Shiva, in the natural way" (187).

Births of Brahmâ, Viṣnu and Maheshwara.

Thus three gods were born of the personified primordial energy.[1] Dharma endowed Shiva with three eyes, using these words: "Shrî Dharma said, 'You have recognized me and thus, though formerly blind of both eyes, you have now become three-eyed'" (198).

Shiva gifted with three eyes through the grace of Dharma.

Râmâi has again spoken through the lips of Dharma Niranjana of the marriage of Âdyâ with this Maheshwara. Thus, Dharma says (to Âdyâ):—

"I say, go on creating thus.
In the next birth Mahesha will marry you."[2] (221.)

[1] The mysterious births of these three gods have been thus told in the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta, in *The Songs of Viṣahari*, and in the work of Brahma Haridâsa. Between the first and the third there is a slight difference: in both of these "Dharma embraced Âdyâ and made her sit on his knees". In the MSS. from Orissa also the birth-story of these three gods has been similarly told. In some Hindu works, such as *Mârkandeya Purâṇa*, *Devimâhâtmyachandî*, "Madhukaitabhavadha-prakarana" (stanzas 83 and 84) and Kâshîkhanda, Bhagavatî has been said to have borne Brahmâ, Viṣnu and Maheshwara.

[2] Mânik Datta has married Âdyâ to Shiva. Brahma-Haridâsa has also repeated this. In *Dharma-pujâ-paddhati* also Shiva was married to Âdyâ.

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Section V.—Final Hinduizing of Mediæval Buddhism.

The chapter of the *Shunya Purâṇa* on Creation has thus been brought to a close. All the different functions, from "the beginning of Creation," are represented partly or fully in the modern Gambhîrâ-pandal, in connexion with the Dharma's Gâjan, and also with the Gâjan of Shiva. In the Dharma's Gâjan, the marriage ceremony of Shiva with Âdyâ and the giving of dowry are performed with great *éclat*.

A detailed account of the functions and ceremonies composing the Buddhist festival of Dharma's Gâjan, which, according to the *Shunya Purâṇa* of Râmâi, first took place during the rule of the Pâla dynasty, is to be found in *Dharma Mangala*. We find that each of these functions is also observed in the Shaiva Gambhîrâ. Râmâi called Âdyâ by the Hindu name of Durgâ. Nay, he went to the extent of decorating her with garlands of the javâ flower (China rose)—a favourite with the Hindu Durgâ—and sacrificing goats before her. Hence it is clear that in the time of Râmâi the worship of the Buddhist deities was converted practically into that of the Hindu Shiva and Durgâ. This was done in the following way. At first in Dharma's Gâjan, Âdyâ sat as the presiding deity, Shiva and the other gods attending as spectators only.[1] Then, when the prediction of Râmâi to the effect that "Mahesha will marry her (Âdyâ) in the next birth" came to be true, Shiva received the worship of the Gâjan votaries, with Âdyâ as wife on his left side. Here must be sought the be-

[1] "(Âdyâ) sitting on the ghata (a jar of water symbolizing the infilling power of God in nature) with Shiva, Kârtikeya and Vinâyaka (Ganesha) witnessed the dance and listened to the music with eternal happiness."—Mânik Ganguli.

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ginnings of the modern Gâjan of Dharma and the Gambhîrâ of Âdyâ, the latter among the Brâhmaṇic Hindus and the former among the Hinduized Buddhists. These Buddhists had been falling in social estimation for some time, and constitute probably the first layer of "untouchable" depressed classes that has been deposited on the soil of Eastern India.

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CHAPTER XV.

PEOPLE'S LIFE IN BENGAL ON THE EVE OF MOSLEM INVASIONS.

SECTION I.—BRÂHMANISM ESTABLISHED (ELEVENTH CENTURY).

UNDER the long rule of the Pâla kings, who, ostensibly Buddhist, were really eclectic in matters of faith, the people of Bengal became accustomed to the performance of both Buddhist and Hindu rites. This hybrid trend of socio-religious life became so well established that Brâhmaṇas of the orthodox school could not, with all their efforts, stamp it out to any appreciable extent. Hence they thought it more expedient to incorporate the deities of the Buddhist Vihâras, either as they were or in some modified form, with those of their own religion: and these borrowed divinities were allowed the same rank as the deities of the Hindu Tantric school. The process did not involve any drastic change. For the Buddhist festivals had adapted themselves to the form the society of those days had assumed; and the rites and ceremonies of the Mahâyâna school had become greatly Hinduized to suit the social organism of the time. Even the little vows and observances practised by tender boys and girls were in keeping with that transformation.

Bengal was then connected in various ways with Tibet, China and the adjacent countries. Owing to this

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foreign intercourse,[1] many a god of the Chinese, the Mongols, the Huns and the Burmese also found its way into the Hindu pantheon. The Tantric deities of the Buddhist Vihâras having been recognized by the Hindu Tantric school, the people in general began to forget even the existence of the Vihâras. Thus Viṣṇu, Shiva, Suryya, Târâ and the other gods and goddesses, with their various festivals, became firmly established in Bengal.

The descendants of those Brâhmaṇas who are believed to have settled in Bengal from Kanauj were spreading over the country. The Varman dynasty, descended from some Punjabi royal family, who had, during the declining days of the Pâla Empire in the eleventh century, established their influence in East Bengal, encouraged Vedic Brâhmaṇas hailing from North-Western India to settle in their country. From the title "Vriṣabha Shamkara (Mahâdeva) Gaudeshwara (Lord of Gauda)," applied to Shyâmala Varmâ in a copper-plate granted by him, it may reasonably be inferred that his house was following the Shaiva creed. Under this dynasty the worship of Viṣṇu and Shiva was held in great esteem, and the people bowed to the Brâhmaṇic influence.

Installation of Pradyumneshwara Shiva.

When such was the state of the country, the Sena dynasty descended from some South Indian settlers who had come in the wake of the Tamil invader Râjendrachola (1025), conquered Bengal and established themselves on the throne. Vijaya-sena (1060-1108) dedicated a temple in his newly-founded capital, Vijayapura,[2] on

[1] *Vide* the section on "A Melting-pot of Races" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes.*

[2] The site of the city and the temple have been identified by the Varendra Research Society at a place ten miles east of Rampur Boalia in Rajshahi.

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the banks of the Ganges, to Mahâdeva under the name of Pradyumneshwara. Stanzas composed by Umâpati and inscribed on a stone-plate attached to the temple give us a glimpse into those times. Vijaya-sena was a staunch devotee of Shiva, and was called "Vriṣabha Shamkara Gaudeshwara". We find from *Shekh Shubhodayâ* that he did not take even a sip of water before offering his worship to Shiva.

Section II.—Folk-Tradition about Castes and Creeds.

Founding of Kulinism.

Vijaya-sena was succeeded by his aged son, Vallâla-sena (1109-1120), who is famous in Bengal tradition as the founder of Kulinism—the Hindu institution of Heraldry, on which is based the present-day hierarchy of social grades in Eastern India. But the tradition may be as unfounded as the other one about Âdishura and his importation of Brâhmaṇas from Kanauj into Bengal. He held in esteem the Shaiva Tantric view. We may gather many anecdotes of his life from the *Vallâlacharita* of Ânanda Bhatta.[1] When Aniruddha Bhatta became the spiritual preceptor of Vallâla, his faith turned into the channel of Shaivaism. The king did not look upon the Buddhists with favour, hence they also did not like him.

Internal dissension among the several castes.

Society in Gauda was perturbed over an incident relating to a woman of the Doma (very low in social estimation) caste; and, as a consequence of this, many members of the higher castes ceased to have any connexion with Vallâla. About this time also the census of the Brâhmana and the other castes is said to have

[1] He was at first a follower of Shaivaism, his family creed. In his mature years, however, at the instance of a Tantric Buddhist named Simhagiri, he is believed to have adopted the Buddhist view.

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been instituted. Vallâla was not favourably disposed towards the Suvarṇa-vaṇikas (goldsmith caste); hence the millionaire merchants and traders were not pleased with him. He vented his spleen upon them by removing them from the pale of the Vaishya caste, and by his orders they were degraded to the extent of being "untouchables". This state of things continues till now, even the water touched by them being considered unworthy of being used by persons of the higher castes.

The people of the ostracized mercantile class, who observed the Buddhist rites and ceremonies, purchased the favour of the Brâhmaṇas and succeeded in entering the pale of Hindu society. It was probably an age when social status was being discussed by every order of people in the country, and this naturally led to dissension over the question as to who were kulinas (nobility or social aristocracy) and who were not. To the problem of creeds was thus added the problem of castes as to their ranks in society, and the history of their origin and growth. The Ghatakas (professional match-makers) were engaged in compiling the genealogical reference-books (kula-panjikâ) of the several castes. Dissatisfied with the conduct of Vallâla, his spirited son, Lakṣmaṇa-sena, is said to have retired to Vikramapura in East Bengal and endeavoured to organize a separate society there.

Pâtâla Chandî.

From the epithet "Nihshamka-shamkara Gaudeshwara" (lit. Lord of Gauda, who may be compared to Shamkara, i.e. Shiva, and is above all fears) attached to the name of Vallâla, one feels inclined to regard him as a Shaiva. Fascinated by the Tantric practices and the goals said to be attainable by them, the people of the country had long been embracing the Shâkta and the Shaiva creed of the Tantric form. The worship of Târâ

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was especially in vogue in Gauda.[1] The Pitha (a shrine containing, it is said, a part of the dismembered body of Shiva's wife) of Pâtâla Chandî (a village in the present district of Malda) took its origin from a part of the body of Shiva's wife. In *Padma Purâṇa* occurs the line, "Pâtâla in Pundra Vardhana," and *Devî Purâṇa* also assigns Pâtâla Devî to Pundra Vardhana. Âgama Vâgîsha, in his *Tantrasâra*, has ranked Pundra Vardhana among the fifty-one Pithas; and it is Pâtâla Devî that is, according to him, the presiding deity of Pâtâla. This shrine of Pâtâla was on the banks of the Ganges, to the south of Gauda.

Goddess Prachandâ, or Chandî.

In *Vrihannîla Tantra* it is said that goddess Prachandâ flourished in Chandipura, which is, according to this Tantra, one of the fifty-one Pithas. Thus it is said: "Goddess Prachandâ, also called Chandî, Chandâvati and Shiva, reside in Chandipura". This Chandipura was a suburb of Valâlla's city, and is at present a village in the district of Malda.

The Mandâra Bhairava.

It is customary that a Bhairava (a name of Shiva, almost as a correlative of Shakti) should live close to a Shakti in the Pitha place. Accordingly, here also we see that a Shiva of the name of Mandâra resided in Pundra Vardhana. About this time the influence of the Tantrists of the Shaiva-cum-Shâkta cult became exceedingly great throughout Bengal. Among the relics recently unearthed, the images of Tantric deities, scattered here and there over the country, greatly out-

[1] In *Shaktisamgama Tantra* it is said that the worship of Târâ obtained unopposed in Gauda. According to *Rudra Yâmala* (a Tantric work), Vashistha, acting upon the advice of Buddha, brought Târâ Devî from China. In *Kuvjikâ Tantra* also Târâ Devî has been said to have been imported from a foreign country. Târâ (in her different forms as Âryya Târâ, Vajra Târâ, Banddha Devî, etc.) has been pointed out to be akin to Kâli.

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number all others. During the twelfth century the Tantras were chiefly followed in the management and regulation of social affairs. The temples of Chandî, Châmundâ and Vâsulî are even now amply in evidence.

It was not with the lower castes only that Tantrism prevailed so extensively; the Brâhmaṇas also had begun to pay but little heed to the older Vedic rules and injunctions. This led the minister Halâyudha thus to express his regret in his *Brâhmaṇa-sarvaswa* (a treatise on the whole duty of a Brâhmaṇa):—

The Brâhmaṇas relinquished the Vedic and took to the Tantric way.

"In this degenerate Kali or Iron Age, owing to the shortness of life, understanding, energy and devotion, only the study of the *Vedas* is undertaken by the Westerners (i.e. natives of the western part of India), and the Brâhmaṇas of the Râdha and the Varendra country, on the other hand, without studying the *Vedas*, apply themselves to the finding out of the details and the functions of sacrifices and other rites with the help of that branch of the *Vedas* which is known as 'the settlement of rites and duties,' but which throws only a sidelight on the meaning of the *Vedas*. Even by this process they cannot arrive at the import of mantras and duties laid down in the *Vedas*, the knowledge of which alone can confer the desired result, and the absence of the knowledge of which is therefore said to be inefficacious."

Ignorance led the Brâhmaṇas to resort to oppression to keep up their former dignity, and this led Vallâla, it is said, to banish a large number of them from his kingdom, ostensibly as Hindu missionaries among the neighbouring peoples, e.g. of Ṇepal, Burma and Orissa.

Banishment of Brâhmaṇas.

"Sixty were sent into Bhotan and Magadha, and fifty into Utkala and Daranga, and thirty into the country of Sakhi Moranga." This is the way in which, says the minstrel, the banishment was effected.

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This procedure struck terror to some extent into the heart of the Brâhmaṇic community.

Section III.—Halâyudha the Sociologist and other Men of Letters (Twelfth Century).

Synthetic Treatises on socio-religious problems.

When the germs of social revolution and of internal dissension among the several castes were developing, Lakṣmaṇa-sena (1120-70) ascended the throne of Gauda, which since became known as Lakṣmaṇâvatî. The epithets of "Arirâja-sudana-shamkara" (like Shamkara or Shiva the destroyer of the chief of enemies) and "Parama-Vaiṣṇava" (a staunch devotee of Viṣṇu) lead one to infer that he was a Shaiva first and then became a convert to Vaiṣṇavism. His copper-plate inscriptions are found to have been introduced by hymns in eulogy of Shiva. The great scholar Halâyudha was appointed the "Gaudendra-dharmâ-gârâdhikâri" (officer in charge of the religious affairs of the King of Gauda) during this reign. For the settlement of all religious controversies of the people of Gauda he compiled a treatise named *Matsya-Sukta* on the basis of the *Vedas*, the *Code of Manu*, the *Purâṇas* and the *Tantras*. The supremacy of the Tantrists in the land had caused objectionable practices to run riot. To check this and yet to preserve the spirit of Tantrism, his *Matsya-Sukta* was composed. He also compiled the following encyclopædic works: *Mimâmsâ-Sarvaswa*, *Vaiṣṇava-Sarvaswa*, *Shaiva-Sarvaswa*, and *Pandit-Sarvaswa*. Each of these was intended to be a manual of the "whole duty" to certain classes and for certain purposes. The twelfth century was indeed a period of socio-religious stock-taking, re-interpretation and re-adjustment, and witnessed the beginnings of a new order of things in Bengal.

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Halâyudha had two elder brothers, named Pashupati and Ishâna, the first of whom compiled a body of laws for the government of Hindu society under the name of *Pashupati-paddhati*, or *Samskâra-paddhati* (a System of Laws for the Reformation of Society). Hindu Law.

The scholar Ishâna, well versed in Smriti and Mimâmsâ, composed a treatise named *Âhnika-paddhati* (System of Daily Worship) for the guidance of the Hindus with respect to their daily duties and observances. The daily practice of the Hindus.

Shulapâṇi was a distinguished scholar in the time of Lakṣmaṇa-sena. He composed *Dipakalikâ*, a commentary on *Yâjnavalkya-Samhitâ* (The Institutes of Yâjnavalkya). Dipakalikâ, by Shulapâṇi.

Under the direction of Lakṣmaṇa-sena, the Buddhist Puruṣottama Deva compiled a lexicon under the name of *Trikândasheṣa*. It is full of historic materials concerning that age and the previous one. Under the royal direction he also wrote *Laghuvritti*, a commentary on the celebrated Grammar of Pâṇini.[1] A lexicon and a commentary on Pâṇini.

Shrîdhara Dâsa wrote *Sukti-karnâmrita*, containing selections from Bengalee poets. This work is likely to be of considerable help to historians. The anthologist mentions four hundred and fifty authors. Sukti-karnâmrita.

The poet Govardhanâchâryya was an adept in the art of writing poems, the mainspring of which was the sentiment of love. He composed such a work under the name of *Âryyâ-Saptashati*. Âryyâ-Saptashati.

In imitation of Kâlidâsa's *Meghaduta*, the poet Dhoyî wrote *Pavanaduta* (The Wind as Messenger).[2] It contains a beautiful account of the country of Gauda. Pavanaduta, a poetical work, containing an account of Gauda.

[1] The Vedic portion of Pâṇini's work was omitted from this. It was favourably received in Gauda and Varendra.

[2] In this poem the Gandharva-girl Kuvalayavati makes the wind the messenger of her love for King Lakṣmaṇa.

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It may not be out of place to quote a few lines from this description :—

"With white edifices the city of Mahâdeva looks as grand and beautiful as the Kailâsa mountain itself. There is installed here on the banks of the Ganges an image of Ardha Gaurîshwara (a joint-image consisting of a half of the body of Shiva and a half of that of his wife, Gaurî). A huge dam, immortalizing the name of King Vallâla, intervenes between this place of Mahâdeva and the Ganges, although not so far away." Then follows a description of Vijayapura, the capital of Lakṣmaṇa-sena. "Vijayapura contains a huge cantonment. Look here! you will find there on the roofs of houses small rooms covering the stair-cases, and you will find numbers of pictures engraved on the walls. The place is very sacred. Here Lakṣmaṇa-sena has his palace, consisting of seven apartments. There is a great tank also in the house. The public thoroughfares of the capital resound with the jingling of the anklets worn by public women. The whole night is kept awake by the loving conversation of the female votaries of the god of love." [1]

Gîtagovinda, by Jayadeva.

We cannot ascertain whether Jayadeva composed his *Gîtagovinda* at Gauda, but it is certain that his sweet songs were sung before the Lord of Gauda. It is not unreasonable to guess that, fascinated by the charming music of these lays, Lakṣmaṇa-sena was induced to embrace the Vaiṣṇava creed.

"Umapâtidhara alone knows how to embellish and amplify a style, and Jayadeva alone knows how to keep up the correctness and purity of diction. In the swiftness of style and the collocation of difficult words Sharana is the most skilled. Âchâryya Govardhana

[1] This work earned for the poet the title of "Kavirâja" (lit. king of poets) and other honours from Lakṣmaṇa-sena.

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has no rival in dilating upon the sentiment of pure love as a matter of personal experience; and the poet Dhoyî has the peculiar power of retaining whatever he hears and afterwards reproducing the same verbatim."

King Vallalasen himself had been an author. He wrote *Dânasâgara*, a work on law, and *Adbhutasâgara*, a work on astronomy. These and other works of the twelfth century were all written in Sanskrit,[1] and not in the vernacular Bengali. This has been described as the "Augustan age of Sanskrit learning" in Bengal. Lakṣmaṇa-sena was like his grandfather, Vijayasena, a military genius and a conqueror, and like his father, Vallâla, was a poet and a patron of literature. Like Harṣa of the seventh century, and Akbar the Great Moghul of the sixteenth, this warrior-author-philanthropist used to hold *conversazione* with scholars on literary and religious topics and listened to the lays of *Gîtagovinda* from the lips of Jayadeva and his friends, Parâshara and others. His generosity, too, was proverbial.

In the time of Lakṣmaṇa-sena the rule of Brâhmaṇas was established in Bengal under royal "protection" and it was they who were the leaders of Hinduism. Codes of their composition and ways of religious life exhibited in them were the forces at work in organizing the Hindu society of that day. And it is these codes promulgated by the Brâhmaṇas that are even now governing the social life of the Hindus in Bengal. The origins of the Caste system[2] in modern Bengal have to be sought in the efforts at social reconstruction in Sena times and not in the earlier eras of Hindu rule.

Modern society the same as that constituted by the Sena kings.

[1] *Vide* M. Chakravarti's writings in the J.A.S.B. (Calcutta, 1905, 1906).

[2] *Vide* the section on "Caste System and Military History" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes.*

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In Eastern India the twelfth century was indisputably the epoch of the powerful Senas as the ninth had been that of the mighty Pâla Both these epochs were marked by strong Imperial administration under which the achievements of Bengalee genius attained the highest watermark in medicine, veterinary science, chemistry, sculpture, architecture, *belles-lettres*, poetry and general culture.

Section IV.—*Shekh Shubhodayâ*—A Picture of Moral Degeneration.

Stories are not wanting to prove the increased fondness of the people of Gauda for luxury on the eve of Moslem conquest. Their morals appear to have deteriorated. *Shekh Shubhodayâ* gives a picture of degenerate Bengal.

During the reign of Lakṣmaṇa-sena, a certain Shekh (Mohammedan), "valiant, dressed in black and anxious to keep his head-dress in position," is represented as having arrived at Gauda. One day, "even that Shekh, while wending his way, met with Vidyutprabhâ (lit. as lustrous as the lightning flash), the wife of the dancer Gangâ. She was wearing a tight bodice and resting a gold pitcher on her waist. Seeing her the Shekh said :—

"'Return, O sinful frail woman holding an empty pitcher on your waist, if you wish your own weal—return for a moment, and then you may, O sinful one, go back to your home.'

"Hearing these words, Vidyutprabhâ thus reflected . . .

"Vidyutprabhâ approached him and said : 'Listen, O foreigner! Explain to me the reason why you have addressed me as sinful.' The Shekh replied : 'Hear then : with all virtue the Creator created man, and with

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all vice woman. For fear of you, even the Brâhmaṇa has accepted the Vânaprastha way of life and retired into the wood; and this Shekh, dressed in rags, has gone to reside in the temple of a god in a remote village, yet some of you cast glances at him and others expose to him their breasts. It is for this and not for anything else that you are sinful.' Hearing this, she went up to the Shekh with a smiling face, opened her bodice and showed him her breasts."

The above extract is from a MS. copy of *Shekh Shubhodayâ* of which the date of composition is uncertain. It was undoubtedly written long after Bengal had come under Moslem rule; and as such, gives an account of the demoralizing atmosphere, which, according to subsequent generations, must have led to the loss of their independence. No contemporary literary records or reliable archæological evidences have yet been discovered which may throw light on the circumstances attending the establishment of Moslem rule about 1200.

Section V.—Beginning of Moslem Rule (1200 A.D.).

Pilgrimage was not a safe undertaking after the north-western portion of India had fallen into the hands of the Mohammedans, and in consequence since the middle of the twelfth century the establishment of temples to Shiva was largely resorted to in Bengal and Eastern India. Bhuvaneshwara in Orissa became as holy a shrine of the Shaivas as Benares in the west, and the glory and sanctifying character of Jagannâtha considerably increased. Pilgrimage was then made to Kâmarupa, Jwâlâmukhî and other sacred places of Assam. Tantric Shaivaism became the faith of all, from the lowest Chandâla to the highest Brâhmaṇa. The socio-religious life of those days has come down *in toto*.

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After Lakṣmaṇa-sena his sons Mâdhava-sena, Keshava-sena[1] and Vishwarupa-sena became rulers of Bengal, in succession (1110-1199). Mâdhava-sena was a follower of the Shaiva creed. After the throne was snatched from him, he went away on pilgrimage with Brâhmaṇas. Some words about him are to be found in the inscription on the walls of the Yogeshwara temple at Kumaun.

Keshava-sena was a Saura or Sun-worshipper. His title was "Parama Saura Mahârâjâdhirâja-Ghâtuka-Shamkara Gaudeshwara". Vikramapura in East Bengal was his capital. Gauda may then have passed into the hands of Bakhtiyar. From the copper-plate inscriptions it is known that Keshava and Vishwarupa had to fight with the Moslems and inflicted defeat on them on one or two occasions. But the actual events leading to the final overthrow of the Hindus in North and West Bengal have yet to be brought to light. The general tendency is to accept the story as given by the Moslem chronicler in *Tabakât-i-Nasiri*. But that is *prima facie* absurd as has been pointed out by Banerji in his recent *Bângâlâr Itihâsa* (History of Bengal). About this time, however, for fear of oppression at the hands of Mohammedans, a large number of high-class families of the northern and western districts of Bengal migrated into Vikramapura. Hence it is that these families are found to preponderate in this part of the country at the present day.

[1] The chronology of the Sena kings accepted in this work is that adopted in Banerji's Memoir (A.S.B., 1915), and differs from that in Smith's *Early History* (Third Edition, 1914).

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CHAPTER XVI.

ISLAM IN POPULAR HINDUISM.

SECTION I.—FORMATIVE FORCES IN INDIAN CULTURE HISTORY.

THE age of Harṣavardhana, continuing all the traditions of the Vikramâdityan (Gupta)[1] Renaissance, marks one of the first epochs in the making of modern Hinduism—its culture, cult and literature. The Pâla-Chola period of Hindu Imperialism briefly referred to as the last phase of Independent Hindu India, carries forward and accelerates the formative forces of the age of Harṣa, and thus represents the second stage in the history of a great evolution. The advent of Islam in India, as one of the last waves of Islamization that had overwhelmed European and Asian humanity during the period from 600 to 900 A.D., closes the second epoch in the formation of modern Hindu civilization, and initiates the third.

Islam was regarded in India by the people who encountered it for the first time, primarily, and for a long period, solely, as an alien system of socio-religious faith and institutions. The character of Islam as a political power in India, as one of the rival claimants to the

[1] *Vide* the chapter on "The Beginning of Hindu Culture as World-Power (300-600)" in *Chinese Religion through Hindu Eyes*: "With the establishment of the Guptas at Pâtaliputra we enter modern India".

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revenues of the land, was at first only subsidiary, or at any rate not felt as such till considerably after it had become a settled fact. And when the secular pretensions and political titles of the Mussalmans were firmly established in the consciousness of the people, the Hindus perceived all the more the new ideals of social life and thought and religious rites and ceremonies with which the proselytizing creed of the camel-driver of Mecca was associated.

The people of Hindusthan did not invite Islam with warm feelings, nor did they allow it to settle down without great opposition. Northern India or Âryâvarta, however, fell a more or less easy prey to the onrush of the Moslem hordes, and by the middle of the sixteenth century the Great Moghul was firmly established as the paramount sovereign. Dâkṣiṇâtya or India south of the Vindhya ranges, was not, however, the easy plain of the North, and did not allow of any smooth sailing to a conquering army. The southerners presented their bulwarks against the alien faith and power first in Vijayanagara and later in Mahârâṣtra.

Âryâvarta has known of no considerable patrons of Sâyan-âchârya and Mâdhav-âchârya since the beginning of the thirteenth century, or of no powerful confederacy of the Hindus to measure their strength with the Moslems except in the mixed Sikh Misls. We are in fact at the parting of ways—Hindu culture and civilization developing along two distinct channels in Northern and Southern India since the beginning of the thirteenth century. The third stage in the making of modern Hindu cult and culture witnesses the working of two separate formative forces. Southern Hinduism grows by *induction*, to use a term of electrical science, i.e. by opposing, and as the result of conscious movements against, the alien cult and culture. Northern

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Hindu culture, on the other hand, grows by *conduction*, i.e. by receiving and assimilating, and as the result of more or less conscious adaptation to, the new ideals, if not of the Pathans, certainly of the Great Moghuls, —and this in fine arts, literature, social etiquette, religious institutions and what not.

The Hindu literature and life of a section of Northern India, e.g. of Bengal, since the thirteenth century bear out this development of Hinduism along lines different from those in the South—in being greatly Islamized. The Mohammedan elements in Hindu literature of this period have been noticed by Dineschandra Sen in his *History of Bengali Literature*. Haridas Pâlit's historical work, *Gambhîrâ*, which has been liberally drawn upon for the present monograph, furnishes abundant proofs of the *rapprochement* of Hindus to Mussalmans in forms, ceremonies, rites, usages, etc. In Narendranâth Law's *Promotion of Learning in India during Muhammadan Rule* considerable sidelight has been thrown on Hindu-Moslem intercourse in language, literature, music and paintings.[1]

It is well known that Urdu is practically a new language born of this Indo-Islamic wedlock. The Bengali language also owes "its elevation to a literary status" to the Mohammedans. "Instances of Bengali translation of Sanskrit and Persian books at the order of Mussalman chiefs are not rare. They served to remove the supercilious spirit in which Bengali was looked upon by the Sanskrit-loving Brâhmaṇas and Hindu Râjâs." "In the domain of music," writes Mr. Law, "it is very perceptible how the Hindus and Mohammedans were borrowing from each other. . . . This process of inter-

[1] *Vide* Havell's *Indian Architecture* (Murray, London, 1913), and Coomâraswâmy's *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon* (Foulis, London, 1913).

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mixture was not new in the time of Akbar, but dated from a long time back. . . . Khyâl, which is associated with the name of Sultan Husain Sharqin of Jaunpur as its inventor, has become an important limb of Hindu music, while Dhrupad has engrafted itself on Mohammedan music." Further, "Akbar's was a systematic and deliberate policy of protection of Hindu learning, which showed itself in the generous provisions he made for the education of Hindu youths in their own culture in the *madrasas* along with Mohammedan boys; in the discussions which he initiated in the *Ibâdat Khanah* with the orthodox Hindu learned men; in the translations of Hindu classics and scriptures; . . . and finally in the state patronage bestowed on distinguished Hindus for their proficiency in such fine arts as music and painting".

Section II.—Aggressive Islam in Eastern India.

Indian Eclecticism helped forward under Islamite pressure.

Mediæval Bengali works afford ample evidence of the way in which the transition from the neo-Buddhism of the age of Vardhanas, Pâlas and Senas into Tantric Hinduism or Shaiva-cum-Shâktaism (i.e. the transformation of the worship of Âdi Buddha, Dharma, Târâ, Niranjana, Shunya, the Void, and all other divinities of the latter-day Mahâyânic pantheon to that of the Âdyâ, Durgâ, Kâlî, Mangala Chandî, Manasâ, etc., and of Shiva, Âdama, Maheshwara, etc.) was helped forward by the advent of the new faith of the conquering Pathans and Moghuls. We find traces of Islamization or adaptation to the conditions of the Islamic world in both the declining Buddhistic lore as well as the rising Hindu literature of the time. It was, in fact, an age of rapid assimilation, as we have remarked above—give and take of ideas; and every bit of socio-religious and

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literary picture of the day bears witness to all the three factors—Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, that made up the complex web of Indian life.

The Dharma Gâjan songs and hymns, interspersed with Mohammedan ideas, are a clear proof of the fact that after the establishment of the Mohammedan kingdoms the followers of Dharma were not allowed to offer their worship openly. The reasons also are not far to seek. First, the Mohammedans were dead enemies of idolatry; secondly, in the eye of Brâhmaṇas and Hindus generally the Buddhists had sunk down to the rank and status of "untouchable" Domas (a very low-class people who generally earn their livelihood by making baskets and wicker-work); they were put to great impediments at every step in the performance of their religious services. Thirdly, the majority of the landholders of the province were Hindus, and hence, for fear of incurring the displeasure of the Brâhmaṇas, they could in no way encourage these Buddhist Dharma festivities.

For these reasons the Dharma worshippers could not offer their worship to Dharma in many parts of the country. They were, however, equal to the occasion. In the serious struggle for existence that had almost overwhelmed them, they resorted to many a trick at once to draw a veil upon their real creed and also to win over the Mohammedans to their side. Thus they held the festivities of Dharma by giving them the air of a debased form of Mohammedanism and also by vilifying right and left the gods of the Hindu pantheon. Nay, they even succeeded in having it pronounced through the lips of the Moslem officers called Kâzis and Khonkârs that the prayers were really offered to Khodâ or the Paygambaras of Islam, and were full of encomiums of the Mohammedans. The *Bada Jânâni* songs bristle with spite and jealousy against the Brâhmaṇa.

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During Mohammedan supremacy there had been a time when the Hindus also could not openly profess the creed of their conscience. Then they also had to take recourse to various tricks to throw dust in the eyes of the Kâzis. Thus they introduced the worship of Satya Pîra (a Mohammedan saint), which was only a pseudonym for their own "Nârâyâṇa" or Viṣṇu.

Independent Hindu chiefs.

The Hindu Zamindars (landlords) in many places retained or regained virtual independence during the Mohammedan regime, and could then generally perform their religious ceremonies without being interrupted or molested. Hence the Gâjan of Shiva, which had already taken possession of the Hindu mind, was largely patronized by them[1] and gradually became a more and more powerful institution.

Just as the Hindus invoke and worship Gaṇesha and other gods and goddesses in connexion with the worship of any particular god or goddess, the Dharma worshippers also following suit began to offer worship to Gaṇesha and the other Hindu gods or goddesses in connexion with the worship of Dharma. This was, however, only a screen to hide the service of "Niranjana identical with the Void". For we find that although they substituted Durgâ for Âdyâ, and Hari or Viṣṇu for Dharma, yet the essence of their meditation revealed itself through such phrases as "having neither body nor sound" and "Niranjana identical with the Void". Again, in worshipping Viṣṇu they were not really guilty of serving two masters at the same time, for the Hindus had already accepted Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Veiled Buddhism.

[1] In the Bengali monthly *Pravâsî* (February-March, 1915) there is an article by a Mohammedan writer giving a list of seventy Hindu chiefs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in different parts of India.

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The Brâhmaṇas, however, still looked upon this veiled Buddhism with an evil eye and violently hurled it down headlong, reducing, in the eye of society, the worshippers of Dharma to the status of untouchable Domas and Chandâlas, who occupy the lowest rung of the Hindu social ladder. The composers of the songs and hymns of Dharma had, therefore, to live in perpetual fear that at some time or other they might be deemed fit for excommunication through the administration of "social" justice.

Section III.—Hindu Deities in Mohammedan Bengal.

The *Shunya Purâṇa*[1] (twelfth-thirteenth century?), in the form in which we have it, represents a very important stage or stages in the socio-religious evolution of the people of India. The gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon are here presented under two environments, one the atmosphere of declining Buddhism, the other that of aggressive Islam.

According to his own statement in the *Shunya Purâṇa*, Râmâi Pandit propagated the worship of Âdi Buddha and of his personified energy under the name of Prajnâ-pâramitâ. In introducing the former, he said :—

> "There was neither form nor figure,
> Neither sound nor sign,
> Neither the sun, nor the moon,
> Neither day nor night."

Nay, there was nothing at that time—"It was all chaotic".

"The Lord's mind was filled with (the idea of) the Shunya (void). Master of illusions, he thought within himself, 'Whom am I to create now out of this void?'"

[1] The authorship of this work, as of almost every other literary production in ancient and mediæval India, has, in the absence of positive evidences, to be attributed to a cycle or school.

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"The Lord himself created his own body,"—then "out of the Lord's body sprang the god Niranjana". Thus the Lord left his formless state and assumed a form; then after ages had elapsed—

"The bird Ullukai came into being from the breath or exhalation."

After creation was thus commenced, the Lord created Kurma (tortoise) and then the Vâsuki snake.

"He tore asunder the sacred thread of gold and cast it off into the waters—and up sprang from there the thousand-headed Vâsuki snake."

Thereafter he brought into existence Nature, the basis and primary condition of the creation of beings.

"While travelling about, a drop of perspiration fell from his body and gave birth to the goddess named Âdyâ (lit. the primitive energy), Durgâ and Jayâ (the female agency in creation)."

Intent upon committing suicide, Âdyâ drank, for poison, the seed of Dharma, and thus in course of time became mother of three sons, named Brahmâ, Viṣṇu, and Maheshwara.

"In your desire to die you drank honey (seed) for poison, and thus gave birth to Brahmâ, Viṣṇu and Maheshwara."

Shiva (Maheshwara) saluted Lord Dharma by touching his feet.

"There sit together Ulluka, Âdyâ Shakti (i.e. primordial energy) and Niranjanâ. Shiva saluted the Lord (Dharma) by touching his feet."

Râmâi Pandit, Mahâdeva Dasa and Valarâma Dasa have entertained almost the same opinions about Dharma and Âdyâ. This Shiva of the *Shunya Purâna* is also found to have been invited to attend the Gâjan or festival in honour of Dharma.

Hindu deities dancing attendance on Dharma.

"Hara (Shiva) riding his bull duly equipped hastened to the Gâjan of Dharma."

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The Gâjan of Dharma, as instituted by Râmâi, was probably an imitation of the Buddhist festivities witnessed by Hiuen Thsang. In the latter, Harṣa and Kumâra Deva appeared as Indra and Brahmâ respectively to serve Buddha. Similarly in the former also, we find the gods of the Hindu pantheon present. Brahmâ, Indra, the king of the celestials, on his elephant named Airâvata, and Nârada also on his vehicle, the Dhenkî, graced the temple of Dharma.

The status of Shiva in the *Shunya Purâṇa* is well described in the following passages :—

"When the Lord travelled naked from door to door begging alms and with the name of God on his lips," Bhagavatî Âdyâ advised Mahesha to take to cultivation :

"Grow in your fields all the varieties of crops and grow bananas also. So that we may get all the necessary things on the occasion of Dharma worship."

Also, in the Devasthâna (or abode of gods) as pictured by Râmâi we have the following :

"With his feet turned upwards and head turned downwards, Pashupati (Shiva) has struck up a concert with his Shiṇgâ (a horn used for blowing) and Damaru (small drum, these two being the favourite musical instruments of Shiva). He is playing a song on the Shiṇgâ to the music of the Damaru. He is meditating on Dharma and is playing on his cheeks. (This particular music sounding Vom, Vom, is struck up by beating one's fingers against one's cheeks, and is said to be very dear to Shiva)."

For the pleasure of Dharma, all the gods are found to take part in singing and dancing on this occasion.

From the above accounts it would appear that Shiva has so long been introduced in the Gâjan of Dharma merely as a dancer or spectator—he has not yet been

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able to assert his own influence. And this picture of Shiva and the other gods dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments may not have been the product of Râmâi's own imagination. For it was the established custom among Buddhist votaries to amuse themselves on the occasion of their festivals by appearing in the masks of Hindu gods and goddesses.

The picture of the Mohammedan invasion that was drawn in the *Shunya Purâṇa* under the title of the *Ruṣmâ* (*wrath*) *of Niranjana*, and that was said to have been sung by Râmâi Pandit, was not really his work. This invasion-song was composed at some later period and then incorporated with the original *Shunya Purâṇa*. Songs like this are composed in connexion with the Dehârâ-bhanga (lit. breaking down of the dehârâ or temple) of the Gâjan. Such pictures of Mohammedan invasion are also found in other Bengali manuscripts relating to the worship of Dharma. The following extracts are taken from the *Shunya Purâṇa*:—

Hindu deities Islamizing.

"Dharma assumed the form of a Yavana (Mohammedan) with a black cap on his head and with triruchas (tridents) in his hands. He rode a beautiful horse, the sight of which sent a thrill of terror through the three worlds and assumed the only name of Khodâ (God).

"The formless Niranjana became incarnated as Vesta (paradise) and happily uttered the name of Dâmodara.

"All the gods unanimously resolved to put on and did really put on gladly (the) loose trousers (worn by Mohammedans).

"Brahmâ became Mohammed, Viṣṇu Paygambara (the prophet), and Shulapâṇi (i.e. Shiva) became Âdam (i.e. Adam).

"Gaṇesha became Gâzi (a Mohammedan saint),

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Kârtika Kâzi (Mohammedan judge), and all the Munis (Hindu ascetics) became fakirs (Mohammedan Sarnyâsis).

"Casting off his own religious habit Nârada assumed that of a Sheikh (Mohammedan).

"The Sun-God, the Moon-God, and many others became foot-soldiers, and all together struck up a concert.

"Even the Goddess Chandikâ (personified primordial energy) assumed the form of lady Hayâ (Havâ, i.e. Evil), and Padmâvati that of lady Nura (lit. light). And thus all the gods in a body entered Jajapura."

They pulled down walls and doors, roved about and plundered (whatever they could), and had the cry "seize, seize" incessantly on their lips.

Râmai Pandit touched the feet of Dharma and said mournfully: "This is a very serious affair".

Section IV.—Mohammedan Elements in Mediæval Buddhism.

In *Dharma-puja-paddhati* the worship of Adi Buddha itself has been designated as Dharma's Gajan. In this work also Mahâkâla (a name of Shiva) has been relegated to the position of the lord's (i.e. Dharma's) garden-keeper.

We have gathered from the lips of Dharma Pandits that *Hakanda Purâna* is the original treatise on Dharma worship. This valuable work is not available now.

For performing the worship of Dharma, his dehârâ (temple) has to be built. The song that has to be sung at its commencement is styled *Harish chandra Pala* (a portion of a *Purana* done to music). The incantation that has to be recited at the time of the construction of the dehârâ is not of much importance, but the Dharma Sannyâsis cannot do without singing the song entitled *Dharma-pujâ* by Harish chandra.

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The following extract is made of this song from *Dharma-puja-paddhati*:—

"Now then of the construction of the dehârâ.

"O God Viṣai, make the vessel (temple) with materials and do not neglect your work.

"(For) King Harish chandra will celebrate there the worship of Dharma and it is now noon."

Thus was Visai brought to build at an auspicious moment the house for the worship of Dharma by Harish chandra. A cord, eighty cubits long and divided into nine parts, hooks of gold, feathers from the tails of peacocks looking like pieces of cloth studded with jewels, for roofing—with all these a decent house was constructed, and inside it on a long seat placed in front of Dharma were seated many gods, etc., etc.

With such songs "the construction of the dehara" was completed. When the permanent dehârâs (buildings) were profanedby Mohammedans—in many cases they were even pulled down—these temporary ones had to be built for the worship of Dharma; and, with a view to please and pacify the Mohammedan audience, at the conclusion of the worship was sung the particular song named *Dehârâ-bhanga* (i.e. pulling down of the dehârâ), in which false and unjustifiable attacks were made upon the Hindus, and the Hindu gods and goddesses were made to embrace Islam.

The "dehârâ-bhanga" song of *Dharma-puja-paddhati* is given below:—

"Then (we come to the topic) of Dehârâ-bhanga.

"The Khonakâra is worshipping with his face towards the west.

"Some worship Âllâ, some Âli and others Mamuda Sâi (the same word as Sain, meaning master, lord).

"The Mian (i.e. a respectable Mohammedan gentle-

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man) kills no living things nor does eat dead ones. He is cooking his food over a slow fire.

"The caste-distinction will shortly be broken—for, behold, there's a Mohammedan in a Hindu family; Khodâ's Rahaman (devotee) has called a meeting (to this effect).

"The crow is asking and Dharma is deciding where Khodâ was first born.

"He (i.e. Rahaman) is spitting on Brâhmaṇas and thus violating their caste (i.e. converting them to Mohammedanism). Jâjpura will (soon) be solely devoted to the service (i.e. worship) of Hassan and Hussain (grandsons of Mohammed by his daughter Fatima).

"He has a horse named Hamsa-râja (i.e. king of geese), and very prompt and obedient to orders: he put on a turban and looked like the moon.

"With arrows and quivers in hand, he set out to kill the Hindu ghosts.

"Be ready, ye brethren Mamuda Sâis—ye Mussalmans—(for they) have just started to kill the Hindu ghosts.

"The Khonakâra started westward—the Mohammedans encamped themselves round the gold temple.

"(He) set artisans to pull down the gold fortress; and they broke down the sâhighara (a particular kind of house) of gold.

"They pulled all the gold fortress with violent force and they broke it down to pieces.

"(Men) and they erected a Masjid (Mohammedan temple of worship) in its place and began to perform Bakr-Id (principal Mohammedan festival), etc., with the slaughter of cows."

In this way are pulled down the fortresses of silver, copper and earth in the south, east and north respectively.

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After the earth-fortress is razed to the ground are recited the following lines :—

"(They) could not pull down sâhighara of earth, and Paygambara (i.e. Prophet, an epithet of Mohammed) established himself about it.

"There were there throngs of Kâzis (Mohammedan judges or learned men) and Mollâs (Mohammedan teachers or priests) and all of them sat down to recite the Korân. With this the Khodâ (God, i.e. the Paygambara) was excessively pleased.

"Thou art, O Khodâ, I know, superior to all others. How I wish to hear the Koraṇ from Thy lips!

"Niranjana transformed to Âllâ will confer blessings. May the enemies of Amin fall under the wrath of Kutub."

"Bada Jânâni (Jânâni really meaning proclamation) or the Great Proclamation.

"Khonakâra is worshipping with his face towards the west: upon his two feet is the excavated trunk of a tree used for an oil-mill as the receptacle of the seed and in his hands are the blossoms of such plants as the ginger, the turmeric, etc., and with this bunch in his hands he is offering the namaz (the prayer of the Mohammedans).

"Ahidin, Sahidin, Kutubdin and Babudin Molla asked Hetâ (the present life personified) there (in heaven) for an account of itself and seized it firmly by the head. (Then) Hetâ of gold colour goes to Khodâ direct."

"Mother Mangala Chandi started for that place, and coming there she became known under the name of Thakardevi . . . (there) Visada Bibi (used with reference to a Mohammedan lady) was crushing pungent spices to pulp, and here the white body of Khodâ was feeling the bitterness of this preparation.

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"(At this) Jagannâtha (with special reference to God Jagannâtha of Puri) interposed himself (between there and here); the hands of this Jagannâtha were lopped off for the theft of wine.

"A certain Brâhmaṇa was making his escape; he was, however, (detected), arrested and made to offer the namâz (Mohammedan worship), i.e. was converted to Mohammedanism. Another Brahmaṇa was sneaking away; he, too, was arrested, and a basket of hedâ (bone) was put upon his head. Behold, with this basket of hedâ on his head and Kavâ (a contraction of Kâvâb, meaning roasted meat) in his hands, there goes he slowly and softly to the quarters of the son-in-law.

"O Hedâ, of the complexion of gold, do good to Khodâ and keep him well, (for which) his Âllâ on high will bless you.

"May Pir Paygamvara (Mohammed) shower his blessings on our heads and may our formidable enemies fall and die under the wrath of Kutub.

"Thus has Râmâi Pandit sung only the Proclamation, (and he hopes that) the Lord will confer boons on the leader."

These queer hymns and songs relating to "dehârâbhanga" may provoke an outburst of laughter, but would indicate to what straits Mahâyânic Buddhism was reduced during Islamite ascendency, and the extent of compromise to which the *minnesingers* of the Râmâi-cycle were willing to submit if they were only allowed to utter somehow the name of Dharma or Shunya.

Section V.—Triumph of Shiva.

The knell of Buddhism had, however, been tolled; and even these shifts could not save it from being absorbed into Shaivaism. Âdyâ, the principal goddes of

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Mahâyâna pantheon, was united in happy wedlock with the Hindu Shiva. The transformation was complete.

In the treatise entitled *Dharma-pujâ-paddhati*, recovered from a Dharma Pandit of Burdwan, we find that Âdyâ was married to Shiva. The representation of this marriage scene is universally admitted by all the Pandits (persons well versed in Dharma literature and the details of Dharma worship) as an indispensable item of Dharma's Gâjan. There is a line—evidently an interpolation—in the body of the book to the effect that the treatise was written by Râmâi Pandit.

Mention is made here of all the varieties of Vâṇa-fodâ (piercing the body with arrows), such as Jihvâ-bheda, Panchavedana, etc. (explained before).

In place of the "invocation to gods" offered in the Gâjan, we have here :—

"I invoke that God who is the wielder of Khat-tânga (i.e. a leg of a bedstead, the name of a weapon), who is seated on the neck of a bull, whose sacred thread is made of a live snake, whose body is daubed with ashes and who is surrounded (and hence adored) by the celestials. Come, O Lord Rudra (Shiva), and sit motionless at the place of worship."

The following is the invocation to Durgâ :—

"I invoke that goddess who is the wielder of a trident, who is the conferrer of success and blessings, who is seated (on a lion) and who is decorated with various ornaments, whose colour is like that of burnt gold and who is surrounded (and hence adored) by the celestials. Come, O Durgâ, the mistress of all attributes and sit motionless at the place of worship."

Thus were Rudra and Durgâ invoked to attend the scene of festivities which were held with music, song and dance.

"Then are the nuptial ceremonies, consisting first of

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Adhivâsa (preliminary ceremonies of a great festival such as marriage, the installation of a king, etc.), and secondly of the holy wedlock ceremony, to be observed."

This is done in the following way :—

"The women made Âdyâ put on bracelets of conch-shells and a new piece of cloth. After the ladies have thus welcomed the couple and observed the traditional ceremonies not enjoined in the Shâstras but somehow or other accepted as inviolable by them (and known as strî-âchâra, lit. female custom), the Brâhmanas commenced reciting the Vedas. . . .

"The priest, actuated by a noble impulse, tied together the corners of the bride's and bridegroom's clothes (as a sign that they were united in holy wedlock). . . .

"Seating Maheshwara on a gold seat (called pâta and nicely decorated for the purpose), the ladies joined together in taking him round Âdyâ.

"(Then) a hundred ladies seated Shakti on a (similar) seat and with words of benediction on their lips, took her seven times round Maheshwara, seated or standing under a gold canopy."

Thus was celebrated the marriage of Pârvatî, now named Âdyâ, with Mahesha, and thus was the Buddhist Âdyâ Chandikâ made to sit (as his consort) on the left side of Shiva. It was about this time that a joint-image of Hara-Gaurî under the name of Vâbhravî-kâyâ was inaugurated in Bengal and Orissa, and before this image the Gâjan festivities in honour of Shiva came to be celebrated from now. Here Shiva was made to sit with Gauri. In Shiva's Gâjan we see that all through the round of festivities Shiva has Âdyâ on his left side and has invited Dharma Niranjana to attend them.

Thus in course of time Dharma Niranjana came to be ousted from his usual place in the Gâjan in favour of Shiva, who was made to marry, as Pârvatî, Âdyâ the daughter of Âdi Buddha.

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Section VI.—Propagation of Shaiva-cum-Shaktaism.

Besides, in the literature of Bengal since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we meet with ample proofs of the prevalence of the worship of Shiva and Shakti.

Hussain Shah came to realize that the native Hindu Princes were the real bulwarks of Mohammedan rule in India, and allowed them to develop their strength till they became like so many independent chiefs. Most of them were worshippers of Shakti; and consequently about this time there were being established in towns and hamlets temples of Shiva, Kah and Durgâ and other forms of Shakti with the necessary images; and various songs and hymns were sung and festivities held in honour of Shiva.

The following legend is given in *Chaitanya Bhâgavata*:—

"One day a singer of songs relating to Shiva came to beg alms at the temple of the Lord, and began to sing these songs by playing on a Darmaru (a small drum, a favourite musical instrument of Shiva) and dancing wildly, turning round and round. Hearing these songs relating to his own virtues, Lord Vishwambhara (Shiva) himself appeared there with fine matted locks."

The Shiva songs of those times are even now sung in the Gambhiras. The Sannyâsis of Shiva travelled from hamlet to hamlet singing the glories of the god and propagating his worship. The consequence of this was that here and there temples of Shiva sprang up announcing the triumph of the Shaiva cult. Even now remains of these temples are met with in many places. There was a Chandî-Mandapa (lit. a temple for the worship of Chandî, hence a house of worship of Shiva and Shakti) attached to the house of every Hindu householder. Every year Chandî was worshipped and

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on every auspicious occasion were sung songs relating to the glories of the goddess.

Goddess Âdyâ of *Shunya Purâṇa* has been identified in the *Chandî* of Mânik Datta with the same goddess as has received the various appellations of Chandikâ, Bhavânî and Durgâ.

"Dharma Niranjana knows that all the gods will worship Bhavâni."

In *Narottama Vilâsa* by Narahari Chakravarti and other Vaiṣṇava works of fourteenth to sixteenth[1] century, we read of the great faith of Bengal Zamindars like Chând Ray and Kedâra Ray of East Bengal in Shakti-cult, and also of the popularity of physical austerities in religion with all ranks. The worship of Kâlî and all the paraphernalia relating to it became, as it were, a school of military training, and kept up the spirit of energism among all orders of the community.

It is a notorious fact that like the "Barons bold" of mediæval Europe and the Daimyos of feudal Japan, the semi-independent Chiefs or Zamindars of Bengal used to wage warfare against each other in season and out of season and occasionally against the Imperial Head. And the deity who monopolized the devotion of this militant nobility was the War-Goddess Kâlî. Historically the most famous Kâlî was that at Jessore, called Jashoreshwarî (the patron divinity of Jessore), worshipped by Pratâpâditya of South Bengal, who was ambitious enough to measure his strength with Akbar the Great Moghul (sixteenth century).[2]

[1] *Vide* J. N. Das Gupta's *Mukundarâm : A Glimpse of Bengal in the Sixteenth Century.*

[2] Akbar's Hindu general, Mân Singh, led a successful punitive expedition against Pratâp and carried off the image of his goddess to Ambar, the capital of his own principality (present Jaipur State in Rajputana), where it was duly installed and has been receiving worship till to-day according to the original Jessore (Bengali) custom.

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CHAPTER XVII.

SANSKRIT TEXTS OF SHAIVA FOLK-LORE.

SECTION I.—THE SHIVA PURÂṆA.

(*a*) *The Limga, or Phallus.*

BEFORE the universe was created, or, at least, when merely the preliminaries of creation were in operation, there existed only a huge phallus, as white as snow, as the emblem of divinity, pervading the whole of space. Shri Viṣṇu and Shri Brahmâ were neither of them able to define the head, base and sides of this form. Although this emblem had a shape, yet it had no limits on any side, pervading, as it did, the boundless and endless void. This stupendous god, covering the entirety of space, is the first god of the Shaivas. He is the First Lord—the God of Gods (Mahâdeva). It is from Him that this great universe has emanated.

In course of ages, however, this huge form of Shiva, co-extensive with the universe, gave place to smaller and smaller forms; and human nature gradually invested him with human qualities—made him the head of a family, swayed by human passions.

"One day Trailokya-Sundarî (i.e. Durgâ, so called from her powers of illusion), the repository of all attributes, went out for a stroll with her lord, Mahâdeva (Shiva), both disguised as hunters. Seeing the male hunter, who looked like beauty and elegance embodied, and charmed with his sweet words, the wives of the

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Rişis (sages) all followed him, despite the protests of their husbands. At this the sages cursed him, saying: 'This ignorant rogue is depriving us of our wives; and the condign punishment for such villains as are addicted to adultery is to cut off their generative organs. But since in this great forest of ours there is no such king as can inflict this punishment on him, we shall take the law into our own hands and punish him fittingly.'

"And, owing to this curse by the sages, there dropped down in the dense forest the highly beautiful phallus, covering many a yojana (one yojana = four, seven, or eight miles)."—*Dharma Samhitâ.*

Although the length[1] of the Indian phallus has nowhere been definitely stated, yet the phrase, "covering many a yojana," may be taken as sufficient proof that the image was made a very long one. Below is given a short account of the incidents in the worship of the phallus as the emblem of Shiva.

"On that day of the light half of the month on which the moon and the planets that were propitious to him on the day of his birth are in the ascendant, the worshipper will have, in accordance with the injunctions in the Shâstras relating to Shiva-worship, to make a limga (phallus) of a certain measurement. Then have to be applied the tests of sacredness of earth to find out a suitable place of worship. Having thus selected the place of worship and made his phallus in accordance with Shâstric details on the point, he will have to offer worship with the ten items (such as the smoke of burnt resin, a light, a seat, offerings of rice, etc., water, betel-rods, etc.) laid down in the Shâstras for the purpose."

Here follow the details of worship. At the outset

[1] Greek phallus of Bacchus is 60 yds., Assyrian phallus is 150 yds.

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is to be worshipped Ganesha, the conferrer of success (who receives the first honour in connexion with every Tantric worship) and the place is to be purified with incantations. The phallus has now to be taken to its bath-room, where it will be daubed with the juice of saffron and painted all over. Thereafter certain engravings will have to be made upon it with a gold chisel. The limga with the altar under it will now have to be worshipped, after being purified with the waters (called Panchâmrita, containing, as it does, the five nectarine substances of milk, curds, ghee, honey and sugar) of eight full earthen pitchers, and also with Pancha-gavya (i.e. milk, curds, ghee and the two forms of excretion of the cow). Then the phallus with its altar will have to be taken to a clear and sacred tank and the ceremony of adhivâsa (i.e. the preliminary ceremony of any great festival, such as the worship of a god, marriage, the installation of a king, etc.) must be performed. The doors and gateways of the purified and beautiful house where this adhivâsa has to be celebrated, are nicely decorated with garlands, the kusha grass and paintings: and here are to be placed images of the eight mythological elephants residing in the eight quarters of the globe, images of the eight tutelary deities of the eight directions, and eight earthen pitchers, filled to the brim with the panchâmrita water. And in the centre of the hall will be installed an altar of some metal or wood, and having the peculiar posture in religious meditation known as padmâsana represented on its surface.

The ceremony will now begin with the offering of worship, one after another, to Subhadra, Vibhadra, Sunandâ and Vinandâ, the four gate-keepers,[1] and with the phallus

[1] According to the *Shunya Purâna*, Dharma has five gate-keepers. Cf. "Now the opening of the doors," "The Ulluka opened the fifth door".

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with its altar being bathed and surrounded on all sides with a piece of cloth. And, after taking the phallus repeatedly to the side of a tank or river, it will have to be laid down with its head eastwards on the altar. On its west is to be placed the offering of oblation. Here it is that the adhivâsa of the limga, the conferrer of all blessings, has to be celebrated for five nights, three nights or one night. Then, consigning the images of the gods worshipped as described above to the river, only the phallus will be taken, with imposing ceremonies, to its own chamber. Thus, after it has been brought back with a flourish of auspicious music, it will have to be laid down, as before, draped in crimson-coloured cloth and surrounded by offerings of oblation. Like the phallus, the image also has to be installed.

This account of the installation and worship of the phallus reminds one of the Buddhist festivities held by Shrî Harṣa Deva. There also we find the image of Buddha taken on the shoulder for a bath and brought back with pompous ceremonies. There are other points also of close resemblance. Similar ceremonies are found to be observed in connexion with the Gâjan of both Âdyâ and Shrî Dharma. It is the chief spiritual guide who will offer clarified butter, etc., as enjoined in the Shâstras, to the fire-pit representing Shiva and known as Shiva-kunda; and the other Brâhmaṇas will have to offer, similarly, clarified butter, etc., to the sacred fire, kindled on all sides, in the names of the principal gods. In connexion with the limga-worship, four Brâhmaṇas are found to offer homa (clarified butter, etc.) to the sacred fire. It is said that in Âdyâ's Gâjan also four chief pandits kindle the sacred fire upon the altar.

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(*b*) *Festivities.*

Dance and music.

"Dance, song, music and other auspicious performances are to attend the worship of the limga of Shiva." —*Vâyavîya Samhitâ.*

That is, we find that besides the kindling of the sacrificial fire, dance, song and music were also among the incidents of worship. Dharma's Gâjan is performed in a similar manner. We have already spoken of the Dehârâ of Dharma as well as of Âdyâ. For the worship of Shiva, the Soul of Souls, it is essential to build a temple resembling a royal palace and possessing all the attributes that such a temple should have according to the Shâstras dealing with Shiva-worship, and with huge gateways and bejewelled panels of gold. It should be furnished, besides, with two light white fly-brushes of the form of a gander, and mirrors decorated with beautiful garlands of sweet fragrance and set with gems on all the borders. In the Gâjan of Shrî Dharma also white fly-brushes and garlands are necessary.

Keeping awake.

Detailed accounts are extant to show that "keeping awake whole nights" was observed with the performance of dance, song and music on the occasion of the Shiva-worship. Thus we find in the *Jnâna Samhitâ*:—

"The wise should repeat the names of the god after worshipping him, in the first of the eight divisions into which the space of day and night is divided, with dance, song and music and actuated by the feeling of devotion."

The first prahara (two hours and a half) of the night is to be spent with various dances, songs and music, and with the formal avowal of the object for the realization of which the worship is offered. And all the remaining praharas are to be spent in the same way.

"Then, avowing the object for the accomplishment of which the worship is offered, and singing various

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songs and performing various dances and music . . ."—*Jnâna Samhitâ.*

It is further learnt that eight siddhas (a class of demi-gods) are constantly dancing before him whose votaries are now worshipping him, crying "All glory" to him. In Shrî Dharma festivals also it is stated that the samyâtas in a body cry: "Glory to Dharma! Glory to Dharma!"

Clear-sighted men should offer worship, in such a state of the soul as is free from desires and is lost in devotion, in every prahara with dance, song and music; and should try with the recitation of various hymns to propitiate the Vriṣabha-dhvaja (lit. he who is known by his bull, i.e. Shiva, who rides a bull). The performer of the vow (of worshipping Shiva) should listen, with all attention, to the recital of the merits (i.e. the peculiar objects and greatnesses) realizable through this vow. The night is divided into four praharas, in every one of which worship has to be offered in this way.

"Then to keep awake the whole night, holding great festivities."—*Jnâna Samhitâ.*

The festivities in connexion with the Shivapujâ are brought to a close with dance, song and music.

"Music and dance should be repeatedly performed till the appearance of the morning sun (above the horizon)."[1]

Keeping awake the whole night in the way described above, the votary should recite at daybreak his guru-mantra (the mystical word or formula whereby to propitiate his spiritual preceptor) and sing religious songs. Then he will have to bathe and offer worship to Shiva.

[1] Worship is offered in the day in connexion with the festivities of Dharma, while it is offered at night in connexion with the Shivapujâ.

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"Reciting the best of mantras and again dancing and singing."—*Jnâna Samhitâ.*

(*c*) *Conventional Ceremonies.*

The giving away of cows, etc., is prescribed thus:—

Directions for the giving away of cows.

"A good-tempered cow, yielding a large quantity of milk, should be given away with dakṣiṇâ (i.e. money given to a Brâhmaṇa as present)."[1]

Procession with Shiva; Sannyâsis with canes in their hands.

The Dharma Sannyâsis, carrying on their heads the sandals of Shrî Dharma, and cane in hand, proceed from village to village with dance, song and music. Similar observances are also to be found enjoined in the Shâstras dealing with the Shiva festivities. "Invoking the celestial Pâshupata (belonging to Pashupati, i.e. Shiva) weapon, worship it on a spacious metallic vessel, set with gems and decorated with lotuses. Then, placing it on the head of a Brâhmaṇa carrying an ornamented stick, and starting out with dance, song and music and various other auspicious ceremonies, proceed, neither very slowly nor very quickly, with lights, flags, etc., to the Mahâpîtha (sacred place), and then, with a view to propitiate the god, go round it thrice." Even now the Sannyâsis of the Gâjan are seen to adorn their persons with various ornaments and go out dancing, cane in hand and carrying copper-plates on their heads.

Tree-worship.

A peculiar ceremony known as Gâmâr-kâtâ was observed in connexion with the festivities of Shrî Dharma, in which the Gambhîrâ (Gâmâra) tree was worshipped and all the Sannyâsis of the Samyâta touched and formally welcomed it. We find in *Vâyavîya Samhitâ* mentioned in the *Shiva Purâṇa* that this worship is

[1] In *Dharma Mangala* also the giving away of cows is prescribed in connexion with the worship of Dharma. In *Shunya Purâna* also it is enjoined: "Give away rice (i.e. food), clothing and cows".

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offered in a building, then the worshippers should go to beautiful and delicate plants and observe the ceremonies of Dvârayâga and Parivâravali and hold continuous festivities there. And—

"Going out with music and seated with their faces towards them (the trees) they should offer them flowers, burnt resin, lights, water and rice."[1]

Worshipping the trident, the thunderbolt, the battleaxe, the arrow, the sword, the noose, the amkusha and the piṇâka.

Lotuses are held in high esteem for worshipping Shiva. In the course of this worship, the glorious trident has to be worshipped in the north-east, the thunderbolt in the east, the battleaxe in the south-east, the arrow in the south, the sword in the south-west, the noose in the west, the amkusha (the iron goad that is used in driving an elephant) in the north-west, and the piṇâka (the bow) in the north. This mode of worship is still observable in Shrî Dharma-pujâ. In the Gambhîrâ the trident and the arrow are found to receive worship.[2] It

[1] The *Shunya Purâṇa* :—

"All the people made haste, hearing that the votaries were proceeding for the Gâmâri Mangala, and flags were carried in rows with merry dance and music." . . . "(They) sat down at the foot of the trees, spreading their seats of the sacred kusha grass, and worshipped Mayanâ. Kindling lights and burning resin, the learned Brâhmaṇas recited the Vedas. The whole place, besides, was smeared with the juice of saffron and sandal paste, and the air sweetened with perfumes and flower-garlands."

And in *Dharma Mangala* occur the following lines :—

"On the tenth day they observed the ceremony of Gâmâr-kâtâ on the river-side, raising triumphant cries and bathing and worshipping with dance and music.

"Following the custom of the sages, the gâmâr tree was 'awakened' (i.e. conjured) by offering worship to Ganesha and the other gods. (Then) the whole body of the Samyâta touched and formally welcomed the tree and tied pieces of thread (râkhî) round one another's wrists."

[2] "Worshipping the five gods, Dharma and the weapons, equipping the chariot and then giving away money."

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has been ordained that Shiva should be worshipped and festivities held in his honour every month, and the merits of these monthly celebrations have also been laid down.

(*d*) *Sanction for the Months of Worship.*

Statement of the merits of monthly worship.

"The best of men that will fast and worship Shiva in the month of Chaitra (March-April) with undivided devotion will be rewarded with wealth in money and kind, with personal beauty and with birth in a high order."

"The man that will fast and worship in the month of Vaishâkha (April-May) will be rewarded with birth in a high order, as well as with wealth and honours." —*Sanat kumâra Samhitâ.*

The hopes here held out are too much for the worshippers of Shiva, and it is for this reason mainly that the months of Chaitra and Vaishâkha seem to be especially dedicated to the worship of Shiva.

It is further ordained that great festivities should be held in the month of Phâlgoona (February-March) when it is associated with the twelfth lunar mansion, and the swinging festival in the month of Chaitra.

Flower temple in Vaishâkha.

"As ordained in the Shâstras, the swinging festival should be held on the day of the full moon in the month of Chaitra." (And) "on the day of the full moon in the month of Vaishâkha, also the swinging festival should be held and a beautiful floral temple should be made in honour of Shiva."—*Vâyavîya Samhitâ.*

Ample references are found in the ancient dramas to the festival of Vasanta (the god of spring) or Madana (the god of love) being held in the month of Chaitra. An account of the merry-makings on this occasion with coloured water is to be found in the drama *Mâlatî Mâdhava*, wherein references are also to be met with

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to the building of flower temples in the month of Vaishâkha in honour of Mahâdeva. This floral temple is simply an imitation of the floral chariot, an account of which has been recorded by Hiuen-Thsang in connexion with certain Buddhist festivals. On these occasions images of Buddha and Bodhisattva were installed in the chariot. Similarly in the flower temple are placed the images of Shiva and his gate-keeper Nandi. Accounts are still extant of the dance, music and other rejoicings indulged in by the devotees on both these occasions.

Annual procession with Shiva held in the month of Chaitra.

We learn from *Kâshî-khanda* that "the man or woman who will fast on the third day of the bright half of the month of Chaitra, and at dead of night worship Mangala-Gaurî (Gaurî, the Bestower of Blessings) with offerings of clothes, ornaments and other articles of worship, and then pass the rest of the night with dance and music, will be rewarded with blessings beyond his or her expectations". It is further stated that one and all of the people of Kashî (Benares) should join in an annual procession in honour of Shiva on the third day of the bright half of the month of Chaitra, and they should also hold a great festival in his honour on the day of full moon of the said month. The following story is told in this connexion. Once upon a time, on the day of full moon of the month of Chaitra, the festival of Shiva was being held, and the gods were cooking heaps of rice with other articles of food. The extensive ceremony of giving away rice by Shrî Harṣa Deva, and the Buddhist festival held by him, are exact imitations of this Chaitra festival. The present-day Gambhîrâ of Malda also faintly represents this festival.

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Section II.—*Harivamsha* on Vâṇafoda (Physical Austerities)

The object of *Harivamsha* seems to be to diminish by stratagem the influence of the Shaiva cult, and to raise in higher esteem the Vaiṣṇava worship of Shrî Kriṣṇa. It contains the story of the terrible defeat of Vâṇa, King of Shonitapura, a staunch devotee of Shiva. This part of the legend seems to be the Sanskrit basis of the Gâjan of Shiva, or the Gambhîrâ festivities. In this work distinct efforts have been made to place the Shaivas below the Vaiṣṇavas, and to show a general degradation of the former.

(*a*) *Discomfiture of Vâṇa the Shivaite.*

"Uṣâ, daughter of King Vâṇa, a staunch Shaiva, fell secretly in love with Aniruddha, a grandson of Shrî Kriṣṇa, King of Dwârakâ. Enraged at this, high-souled Vâṇa imprisoned Aniruddha in an iron cage. The latter implored the assistance of the goddess Kâlî, of complexion dark as collyrium; and, pleased with his devotion, the goddess released him at dead of night on the fourteenth day of the black half of the month of Jyaistha (May-June). On the following night (i.e. the dark night of the new moon), a formidable conflict took place between King Vâṇa and Shrî Kriṣṇa, in which, as soon as the latter had lopped off the arms of his opponent with his discus named Sudarshana and prepared himself to cut off his head, Shamkara (Shiva) cried out: 'Don't, oh don't, behead my Vâṇa; don't cut off Vâṇa's head, rather withdraw your Sudarshana'."—*Dharma Samhitâ.*

"At this the Lord Shrî Kriṣṇa said: 'Let then your Vâṇa live. Here do I recall my discus.'

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"Then, with gracious words, Nandi (gate-keeper of and constant attendant on Shiva) said to Vâṇa; 'Yes, with these wounds on your person, just approach Shiva, the God of Gods'. Upon this King Vâṇa made all haste to approach the Lord Shiva; and powerful Nandi took him up in his own chariot and landed him at the door of Shiva, saying: 'Vâṇa, just go and continue to dance in the presence of Mahâdeva. In this way alone are you likely to receive his blessings.' Greatly composed at this, King Vâṇa, distracted with fears, but anxious for the preservation of his life, approached Mahâdeva with his bloodstained body, and, with great trepidation, began to dance ceaselessly."

The above account is similar to that of *Khila Harivamsha;* but the description of the dance by Vâṇa is different in the *Dharma Samhitâ* of *Shiva Purâna*, where it is said :—

Various performances by Vâṇa.

"Although at that time King Vâṇa had only one head and two feet, yet, in obedience to the instructions of Nandi, he began to exhibit extraordinary performances in dancing before the Lord Shiva, such as the Âlîdha (an attitude of shooting, with the right knee advanced and the left leg retracted), the Pramukha, the Vividhâkâra (cutting many figures), the Shâli and the Sthâna Panchaka, exhibiting gradually a thousand ways of shaking the head, and a thousand modes of the Pratyanîka dance, as well as the several figures of the Châri dance."

The Gambhîrâ dance an imitation of this.

Thus King Vâṇa danced before the Lord Shiva. The mask-dances of Kâlî, Châmundâ, Narasimhî, etc., in the Gambhîrâ are similarly performed. Their gestures and postures seem to be influenced by ideas and sentiments described in such Sanskrit texts. The difference between these and modern methods of dancing is very slight.

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(*b*) *Shiva's Boons to Vâṇa.*

Mahâdeva, always kind to his devotees, felt great commiseration at the distress of King Vâṇa, and was highly moved to see him dance ceaselessly in this almost unconscious state. Then he said to Vâṇa: "My child, I have been touched to the quick at the sight of your distress. I have been highly pleased, however, with your devotion. Now, but ask for the boon of your heart, and it shall be granted to you."

Vâṇa replied: "My lord, if this be your pleasure, then grant me this boon, that I may ever be above decrepitude and death. This is my first prayer."

Mahâdeva said: "Child, I grant that, equally with the gods, you will live for ever, defying death. You are an object of great favour with me. Ask any other boon of me, and I shall be glad to grant it."

Vâṇa added: "If so be your pleasure, then, O Lord, grant me this further boon, that if ever any of your devotees dance before you as I have done, afflicted with grief, wounded with arrows and with my body bathed in blood, he will attain to the state of your own child".

Mahâdeva replied: "Child, that devotee of mine who is simple and straightforward and ever devoted to the truth, and will thus dance before me observing the vow of fast, will obtain these very rewards. Now, ask for such a third boon as you like, and I shall grant you that also."

Vâṇa said: "O Bhava (lit. that which exists, a name of Shiva), may you, then, be pleased to assuage the terrible pain that the discus has caused in my body".

Not only was this prayer granted, but also the God of Gods offered to grant him yet another boon. And, overjoyed at this, King Vâṇa said: "Be pleased to grant me then this boon, that I may be the chief of

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your pramathas (attendants on Shiva), and be known for ever under the name of Mahâkâla". This prayer was also conceded.

(*c*) *Faith of Modern Shaivas in Vâṇa-legend.*

Thus here do we find the origin of the fasts and other austerities, such as the piercing of the body with arrows, as well as of the dance and revelries that are practised on the occasion of the Chaitra festivities, otherwise known as the Chadaka-pujâ, held in honour of Shiva. This will be more clear and apparent when we consider that the author of the legend has it pronounced through the lips of Mahâdeva himself that those of his votaries who will dance like Vâṇa, observing the vow of fast, will obtain the same merits as Vâṇa. It is a great temptation for the ordinary followers of Shiva to be thus able tc attain to the position of Shiva's son and constant attendant, basking in the sunshine of his presence. It is for this reason that during the Chaitra festivities the devotees are seen to dance fantastic and ghastly dances before the image of Shiva, with their bodies pierced with arrows and bathed in blood. Fasts and music and revelries are also observed as additional inducements to purchase the favour of Shiva. It is under the influence of the above persuasion that even now infants are made to dance before the Gambhîrâ temple of Âdyâ. The people firmly believe that by this means they will attain to longevity, position and wealth in this life and immortality in the next.

Section III.—*Dharma Samhitâ*: References to Masks.

We shall now proceed to inquire into the reason why it has become a practice with the votaries of Shiva to dance and sing before his image disguising themselves

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as Kâlî, Durgâ, Châmundâ, ghosts and apparitions. Masks are put on in connexion with the Gâjan of Shiva in Râdha (West Bengal), the marriage of Shiva in Shântipur (Nadia), and the Gambhîrâ and the Shiva festivities of Malda and North Bengal, and also on the morning of the Nilâpujâ day at Kâlighât (Calcutta).

That these songs and dances were introduced on the basis of mythological events and incidents is borne out by *Dharma Samhitâ*, a part of *Shiva Samhitâ*. The mask-dances of Gaurî, Kâlî, Châmundâ, Chandî, Vâsulî, etc., that we now see in connexion with the Gambhîrâ, are in agreement with the *Purâṇas* and in fact based on them.

(*a*) *Disguises of Shiva's Attendants.*

The god Shiva has been represented as Natarâja or lord of dance and revelry. No wonder, therefore—rather it is natural—that his devotees should have recourse to these means to gain his favour.

We read in *Dharma Samhitâ* that one day, while diverting himself according to his pleasure, Chandra Shekhara (lit. one with the moon on his forehead, a name of Shiva) ordered his attendant Nandi with a glad heart: "Go, O Vânarânana (lit. having a face like that of a monkey, an epithet of Nandi, who had such a face), under my orders to the mountain of Kailâsa (reputed to be the abode of Shiva) and bring Gaurî, adorned with ornaments, to me without delay". When Nandi had gone away, the Apsarâs (nymphs) began to indulge in talks like this: "What woman is there save Dâkṣâyaṇî (daughter of Dakṣa, i.e. Gaurî, wife of Shiva) that can dare touch his person?" Upon this stood up Chitralekhâ, daughter of Kumbhânda, and, addressing her sisters, said: "I can personate Gaurî and thus touch him, if any one of you will but be able to assume the

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form of Nandi. It is no hard work with the friends of Gaurî to assume her form." At this, concentrating her mind upon the Vaiṣṇava process of yoga, Urvashî appeared as Nandi, and this led the other nymphs to assume forms other than their own. Thus, Pramnochi personated Sâvitrî; Menakâ, Gâyatrî; Sahajanyâ, Jayâ; Kunjikasthalî, Vijayâ; and Kratusthalî, Vinâyaka—and so excellently that there was no means of seeing through the plot and recognizing who they really were. Last of all, Chitralekhâ, the daughter of Kumbhânda, who was an adept in the art of personating and had an excellent power of imitation, inspired by beholding the elegance and perfection of these players' persons, took recourse to the special form of yoga known as Vaiṣṇava-Atma Yoga, and in no time stood before them, and to the surprise and admiration of all, as Pârvatî herself, of celestial beauty and uncommon charms. It was indeed a masterpiece of personation: even the most trained eyes would have failed to distinguish these imitation jewels from genuine ones. The merry jingle-jangle of their celestial anklets filled the whole place.

Chitralekhâ assumes the form of Pârvatî or Gaurî.

Now, thus disguised, Urvashî approached Shiva and addressed him in these words: "O Lord of Gods, the heavenly mothers (a class of sixteen goddesses, such as Gaurî, Padmâ, etc.) and myself, with Gaurî and the Gaṇas (lit. a host, legion; the large number of Shiva's spiritual attendants) have thus approached you. Be pleased, O Sire, to bless us with a benign look." What Shiva did in reply to this amorous address is thus described in *Dharma Samhitâ*:—

False Nandi's address to Mahâdeva.

"Thus addressed by him and seemingly pleased with it, Rudra (Mahâdeva) left his seat and, one by one, took seven steps forward . . ."

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(*b*) *The "Comedy of Errors".*

Amorous diversions of Shiva with the false Pârvatî.

Then he took Pârvatî by the hand and commenced a round of amorous diversions. This was followed by "the dissimulating mothers all dancing and singing to please Shiva—some dancing, some singing, some smiling (amorous) smiles, and others diverting in other ways".

Dance, etc., by the false mothers.

The false mothers set to dancing and singing round merry Shiva. Some of them added to the joy of the merry couple by dancing and singing suitably to the occasion, and also by the genial glow of their illuminating smiles. The other thousand and one mothers made various sweet sounds, and also made some strange ones. Some among the latter "sang, danced, smiled and even wept".

Real Gaurî appears on the scene.

Shiva lost himself in this vortex of merry-making, and was utterly transported with delight, when there appeared on the scene the genuine Nandi with the genuine mothers, closely followed by the real Gaurî, charmingly dressed, descending from her aerial car with the host of her spirit attendants. The surprise that greeted the latter, when the two sets confronted each other, was beyond description.

"All the (merry) party started up, thinking again and again: 'Who is this Pârvatî—who is this goddess, so richly dressed and so beautiful?'"

There being no distinguishing marks—not even the slightest—between the genuine and the counterfeit Pârvatî, the whole party was lost in confusion.

Nay, the confusion became worse confounded when it was discovered that even the mothers and the other attendants could not be set the real against the sham. This was, however, a source of infinite secret pleasure to the counterfeit mistress and she burst into a peal of merry laughter. The Apsarâs also, extremely amused,

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gave vent to their delight with their natural kilkil sounds. The ghosts and goblins and the Yakṣas (demi-god attendants on Kuvera, employed in the protection of his treasures), too, became mad with delight. Even Shiva himself became highly amused with and greatly enjoyed this "comedy of errors". He was equally delighted with the actions of the Apsarâs.

(*c*) *Masks and "Comedy of Errors" in Modern Shaiva Lore.*

It is this "comedy of errors" which caused so much delight to Shiva that may be taken to be the origin of the practice that has obtained in Âdyâ's Gambhîrâ with the votaries of Shiva to dress themselves in various disguises for dancing in the hope of thus propitiating the god. And the enjoyable diversion of putting the husband to confusion with regard to his wife has become one of the most entertaining performances of the Gambhîrâ-players. Then in course of time came to be introduced, by way of further embellishment, the various other mask-dances, such as those of the various forms that, according to the Tantrist, the goddess Satî (Gaurî in her previous birth, also as the consort of Shiva) assumed to frighten Shiva into permitting her to attend the grand sacrifice that her father Dakṣa was holding but to which her husband had not been invited, and also of the terrible Châmundâ and other forms that the goddess is said to have assumed in the course of the Shumbha-Nishumbha war for the destruction of the formidable demons, Chanda and Munda.

The sanction for all the incidents in the Shaiva festivities of modern Folk-Bengal is thus to be found not only in vernacular treatises specially written for the purpose, but also in the more authoritative *Purâṇas* composed in Sanskrit language. It is for this reason

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that there has ever been in India a community of thought between the masses and the classes, and a natural and necessary connexion of culture-lore with folk-lore. Through all the rungs of the intellectual and moral ladder, from the most nonsensical superstition to the most abstract metaphysics, there runs one increasing purpose which makes the whole Hindu world kin.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

INVENTION OF GODS AND GODDESSES BY THE PEOPLE.

THERE has been a multiplication of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon[1] during the successive ages of Indian history. The literature and art of each age reflect the inventiveness of folk-imagination as displayed in the creation of new orders of deities to help man in the solution of new problems of life.

The Gods of the Rigveda.

When the Vedic Aryans gathered together to perform sacrifices to propitiate the gods, the list of the latter contained the names of Varuṇa, Indra, Agni, Rudra, Vâyu, Mitra, Puṣâ, Bhaga, Âditya and Aditi, Sinivâlî, Saraswatî, Mahatî, Sîtâ, etc. Like the Aryan warriors, Rudra also was decorated with a crown and other ornaments, wielded bows and arrows and prepared medicines with his own hands. Ulluka has been described as a messenger of Yama. Mention is made also of Lakṣmî and Alaksmî.

Gods mentioned in the Upaniṣads.

Kâlî, Karâlî, Manojavâ, Sulchitâ, Sudhumravarṇâ, Sphulinginî and goddess Vishwarupinî—all these have been described in the *Munduka Upaniṣad* as flames of fire and of the form of fire. Durgâ also was only a name of fire.

We find the name of Umâ in the *Kena Upaniṣad*,

[1] *Vide* Macdonell's *Vedic Mythology*, Fausboll's *Indian Mythology*, and Niveditâ and Coomâraswâmy's *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*.

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but not till then as the wife of Rudra. She introduces Brahmâ to Indra. When the gods were unable to recognize fire and the other forms of Brahman, then it was this Umâ that sang his glories.

Post-Vedic Gods.

With the passing away of the Vedic age the forms and attributes of the gods suffered a change. Indra, Agni, Rudra, Vâyu, and Aditi, Saraswatî, Sîtâ, Kâlî, Karâlî, Durgâ, Umâ, etc., had now definite forms attributed to them and were made to share in the enjoyments and sufferings of the world. Detailed accounts of the Post-Vedic deities are to be found in the *Râmâyaṇa*, the *Mahâbhârata* and the *Shrimad Bhâgavata*, as well as in the *Mârkaṇdeya*, *Devî*, *Kâlikâ* and many other *Purâṇas* and *Upapurâṇas*.

Gods of the Râmâyaṇa.

The great poet, Vâlmîki, has furnished us in his *Râmâyaṇa* with a very long list of gods and goddesses. Indra was then the King of Heaven and a warrior. He used even to fight with men. He used to ride an elephant with four tusks, named Airâvata. Brahmâ was a four-faced, four-handed god, riding a goose. His worship was now introduced. Rudra, Sâyana and Yâska are no longer the names of fire. The Rudra of the Vedic age, who used to prepare medicines, has now been transferred to the Kailâsa mountain to live there.

Goddesses of the Mârkandeya Chandî.

Shiva has been given many wives, such as Durgâ, Chandikâ, Kâlî, Châmundâ, etc. They have been accorded a higher position than the gods and described as Âdyâ Shakti (primordial energy). Yama, Indra, Brahmâ and the other lesser gods have been made to acknowledge the suzerainty and bow to the will of Durgâ.

Gods of the Mahâbhârata.

Indra is endowed with a thousand eyes, and Yama, the god of death, is said to have sprung from the planet Shani (Saturn) and to have been placed in charge of

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hell. He rides a buffalo, and Vâyu, the god of wind, a deer. Agni has been conceived as riding a goat. Charmed by the devotion of his votaries, Shiva is found to have condescended to serve them. And it has become a practice to offer worship to Indra and his wife, and to Shiva and his wife.

With a view to having a son born to him, Vâsudeva retires into the hermitage of Vadarikâ and there sits down in meditation on Shiva. Vâsudeva, Valarâma and Arjuna have been exalted to the rank of gods. Valarâma has been recognized as one of the incarnations. Gods of the Harivamsha.

Indra becomes a god of the Buddhists, Jainas and Kâpâlikas. Shiva now drinks the juice of Hâtaka (gold) and resides in the place of cremation. Umâ, Durgâ and Kâlî are his wives. Palm-juice and other kinds of beverage have become favourite drinks of the followers of Shiva. Dakṣa has become the father-in-law of Shiva. Kriṣṇa is said to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Indra, Brahmâ and Shiva have been relegated to a lower position than Viṣṇu and subordinated to him. Gods of the Shrimad Bhâgavata.

In *Nâradîya* and *Dharma Purâṇas*, etc., the glories of Viṣṇu have been described. Although mention is made in these of Shiva and his Shakti, a less importance has been assigned to them. Lakṣmî and Saraswatî have been included in the family of Shiva.

In the *Limga*, *Shiva*, *Devî* and *Kâlikâ Purâṇas*, Shiva and his Shakti have been assigned a superior place to the other gods. In *Shiva Purâṇa*, Shiva is said to have one thousand names.

In *Padma Purâṇa* we hear of the interruption and breaking up of the sacrifice arranged by Dakṣa (father of Shiva's wife, Satî, who sank down to death on the sacrificial ground on hearing of the vilification of her husband by her father), of Dakṣa's ultimate repentance Padma Purâṇa.

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and pacifying Shiva by singing his glories, and of his gaining boons from the god in conclusion. Thus the book is devoted to the extollation of Shiva. We find in it also an account of the journey of gods with Brahmâ and Shiva to Vaikuntha (the abode of Viṣṇu). Reference is made in this also to the story of the construction of a gold image of Sîtâ (it is said in the *Râmâyaṇa* that while performing the Ashwamedha sacrifice Râma had a gold image of Sîtâ made to take the place of his wife by his side).

The Gods in the Samhitâs.

There are several *Samhitâs* (codes of law, conduct, etc.) following the line of the *Shiva Purâṇa*, such as *Dharma Samhitâ*, *Jnâna Samhitâ*, *Sanatkumâra Samhitâ*, *Vâyavîya Samhitâ*, etc. In these Samhitâs we hear of many gods, but the preference is given to Shiva and Shakti.

Like the other *Purânas*, the *Skanda* also contains accounts of gods and goddesses. The special feature of this work is that in it we are told of Kâla Bhairava and of the sudden springing into existence of Bhadrakâlî and Vîrabhadra out of the spleen of Shiva.

In the *Varâha Purâṇa* we find accounts of many gods and of the construction of their images.

Gods in the Tantras.

In the *Uddisha*, *Damara*, *Nakulisha* and the other *Tantras*[1] preference has been given to Shiva and his Shaktis and the various modes of their worship have been described. Also Mahâkâla, Shiva, Bhairava, Bhairavî, the Dâkinîs and the Yoginîs (classes of female demi-gods) have been elevated to the rank of gods.

Gods of the Jaina Purâṇas.

Like the Purâṇas of the Hindus, the Jainas[2] also have Purâṇas of their own. In these, besides their Tirthamkaras, the Hindu deities also have been mentioned.

[1] *Vide* Avalon's *Hymns to the Goddess* and other works on *Tantras*.

[2] *Vide* Stevenson's *Heart of Jainism*.

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The Jaina *Âdi Purâṇa* gives us an account of god Riṣaɒha, on the occasion of whose nativity Indra, his wife and the other gods and goddesses came down to the place.

In the Jaina *Padma Purâṇa* we meet with peculiar accounts of Indra, Hanumân, Râma and Lakṣmaṇa. In the *Aristanemi Purâṇa* mention is made of Durgâ. In the Jaina work named *Bhagavatî Sutra* we find descriptions of the images of the Tirthamkaras. They are adorned with snakes as ornaments. Many of the Jaina gods receive worship. Dhyânî (absorbed in meditation) Pârshwanâtha looks like Dhyânî Shiva.

Gods of the Buddhist Purâṇas.

Like the Jainas, the Buddhists also have their own Purâṇas. The majority of these are devoted to extolling the greatness of Buddha. In *Suvarṇaprabhâ*, however, we meet with invocations to Lakṣmî and Saraswatî.

Gods of the Buddhist Tantras.

The Buddhists[1] call their *Sâdhanamâlâ* and *Sâdhana Samuchchaya* Tantric works. These belong to the Mahâyâna sect. In these we meet with descriptions of the images of the Bodhisattvas, named Lokeshwara, Maitreya and Manjushrî. The other name of Lokeshwara is Lokanâtha. We find the following and other names of Buddhist gods: Avalokiteshwara, Khasarpana Lokeshwara, Halâhala Lokeshwara, Simhanâda Lokeshwara, Hari-hari-hari Vâhanodbhava Lokeshwara, Troilokya-bhayamkara Lokeshwara, Padmanarteshwara Lokeshwara, Nilakanthâ-châryya Lokeshwara, etc. On the left side of many of the images of Lokanâtha Buddha, a female figure named Târâ is found to have been placed. In *Sâdhanamâlâ* a description of the person of Mahottari Târâ has been given. The Buddhist work of *Swatantra Tantra* contains an account of Târâ Devî, and elsewhere mention is found to have been made

[1] *Vide* Getty's *Gods of Northern Buddhism.*

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of Nîla Saraswatî Târâ Devî. Târâ is of dark complexion and has three eyes. The following description of Vajra Târâ is to be found in *Sâdhana Samuchchaya*: "Four-faced, eight-armed and adorned with various ornaments". Like the Hindu Tantric works, those of the Buddhists also tell us of many forms of Shakti.

Gods of the Shunya Purâṇa and Dharma-pujâ-paddhati.

In the *Shunya Purâṇa* and *Dharma-pujâ-paddhati* of Râmâi, among others we meet with the following deities: Dharma Niranjana, Ullukai, Brahmâ, Viṣṇu, Maheshwara, Yama, Indra, Nârada with his conveyance, the Dhenki, Dâmarasâin, Mahâkâla, Âdyâ, Chandî and Durgâ.

Gods of Dharma Mangala and later mediæval Bengali works.

In the *Dharma Mangala* of Ghanarâma, Mâṇik Ganguli and Yâtrâsiddhi Rây, mention is made of Dharma, Hanumân and the gods of *Shunya Purâṇa*.

In the poetical works called *Chandî* by Kavikamkana (Mukundarâma), Mâṇik Datta and others, accounts are found of Âdyâ, Chandî, Shiva and the other Hindu deities.

In the Viṣahari Songs we meet with accounts of Shiva, Manasâ (the goddess of snakes) and many other Hindu gods. In some of these *Lays of Manasâ* mention is made also of Âdyâ.

Shîtalâ Mangala[1] tells us of god Niranjana, Shiva, Brahmâ, Viṣṇu, etc., as well as of Âdyâ. In the story of Shîtalâ also we find an account of her worship as antidote against small-pox.

Gods and goddesses like these, more or less affiliated to the Shaiva-cum-Shâkta pantheon, were invented by mediæval Folk-Bengal principally to help man in the battle of life. They are all embodiments of shakti (energy), and are meant (1) to do away with enemies and

[1] Shîtalâ—mentioned in *Pichchhilâ Tantra* and *Skanda Purâṇa*. Buddhist goddess Hâritî resided in the temple of Lokeshwara. The Hindu Shîtalâ is identical with this Hâritî.

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difficulties, both natural and human, and (2) to promote health, wealth, success in life and general prosperity. *Pari passu* there was being created another order of divinities designed mainly as "Great Exemplars," from whom could be learnt the duties and obligations of life, individual, domestic and social. The ideal relations between parent and offspring, husband and wife, brother and brother, friend and friend, ruler and subject, master and servant, etc., were the themes of the literature and art which brought into prominence this new class of gods and goddesses. And the attribute chiefly personated by these deities is bhakti (love), the emotional element in humanity.

Gods as embodiments of love and teachers of duty.

The bhakti or devotional literature has since about the fifteenth century been the inspiration of the folk by appealing mainly to the sentiments of Love, Faith and Hope as contrasted with the practices of intellectual gymnastics and ratiocinative argumentation. The deities of this literature are (1) Râma and his consort Sîtâ, as well as the ancestors and allies of the great hero; and (2) Kriṣṇa and his sweetheart Râdhâ, as well as their parents and personal friends. The note of love and faith is also the characteristic of the *Mâlsî Songs* of Râmaprasâda, the great saint, devoted to Kâlî or Târâ (wife of Shiva), of the eighteenth century.

It may be said that the Folk-Bengal of the nineteenth century has not cared much to inquire into the Sanskrit *Vedas*, *Samhitâs*, *Purâṇas*, *Tantras*, etc., for the origins and legends of its faith and devotion, but has sought for the "whole duty of man" in Bengali treatises like Krittivâsa's *Râmâyaṇa*, Vidyâpati and Chandidâsa's *Vaiṣṇava Padâvalî*, and the *Kâlî Songs* of Mukundarâma and Râmaprasâda. Through all this literature there has been a steady increase in the number of gods and goddesses, saints and avatâras. In some cases a

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new interpretation has been imparted to the older deities and heroes, who have thereby acquired an altogether fresh significance in the people's thought and activity. There has been no generation of Bengali history without its own mythology, hagiology and anthology.

Agnosticism leading to polytheism.

This is perfectly natural: because the Hindu is fundamentally an agnostic, i.e. has never believed in the possibility of human intelligence ever to unravel the mysterious eternal truths of the universe, or to understand, except negatively, the nature and attributes of God; and therefore he has ever felt to be at complete liberty to *imagine* and invent whatsoever God or Gods he chooses to adore. He has not feared to conceive the Divinity as He, She, It or They. He has worshipped his Deity as father, mother, brother, sister, sweetheart, lover, friend, and what not; and has endowed his own creation or invention with any attributes he likes for the time being. He has borrowed his god-lore from the Mongols, he has taken his god-lore from the hill-tribes, he has imbibed his god-lore from the speechless message of sunshine and snows, and he has evolved his god-lore out of his own head and heart. His polytheism or heinotheism is based essentially on his agnosticism.

Motherland as Divinity.

The Hindu tendency to deify the energies, Nature-Forces or personal attributes and emotions has constructed all the gods and goddesses of India, practically speaking, as so many embodiments of the various phases of the Country itself and of the Culture it has developed through the ages. And the invention of deities has not yet ceased.

The "Knight-poet" Rabîndranâth Tâgore, probably an iconoclast in socio-religious opinions, has been, however, pre-eminently an idolator, nay a polytheist, in and through his art. His celebrated hymn (*c.* 1895) to Mother

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India is in the right orthodox strain which is noticeable in the psalms and songs in eulogy of Saraswatî (Goddess of Learning), Lakṣmî (Goddess of Wealth), Durgâ, Jagaddhâtrî and other goddesses :—

"O Thou, who charmest all mankind!
O Thou, whose lands are ever bright
With ray serene of pure sun-light!
Mother of fathers and mothers!
With the blue deep's waters thy feet ev'r wash'd,
Thy scarf of green ever waving in breeze,
Sky-kiss'd on high thine Himâlayan brow,
Crown'd white thy head with tiara of snows.
First in thy firmament appear'd the dawn,
First rose *sâma*-chants in thy holy groves,
First were reveal'd in thy forest-abodes
Wisdom and virtue and poesy's self.
Ever beneficent! glory to Thee!
From Thee flows food to countries far and wide;
Jâhnavî and Jumna, streams of thy love;
Giver of sweet sacred milk, O Mother!"

It is again the traditional folk-imagination, saturated with the monism of Vedantic thought, that has inspired the following verses of Tâgore :—

"O Thou Dust of my Motherland!
Down to Thee alone do I bend my head.
Upon Thee is the mantle spread
Of universe-bodied Mother Divine!"

The same deification of the Country is evident in the following outburst (1905) of Dwijendralâl Roy :—

"Goddess mine! Meditation's Aim!
Country mine! O Heaven on earth!"

Synthesis of shakti and bhakti in the Country-cult.

But the man who has started them all in this modern Bengali Bhakti-literature is Bankimchandra Chatterji. According to him the ten-armed Durgâ (wife of Shiva) with her whole family and retinue, the most popular goddess of Hindu Bengal in the nineteenth century, who

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was, as we have seen in the foregoing pages, one of the Târâs (Energy) of Avalokiteshwara Bodhisattva in mediæval Mahâyânic India and still receives worship as Târâ in Buddhist China and Buddhist Japan, is none other than Motherland itself with all its resources and forces in natural agents and human arts. This synthetic interpretation crystallized in the song *Vande Mâtaram* (*c.* 1885), is bound to remain the greatest hymn of Folk-India during the twentieth century :—

" Hail! Motherland!
Vande Mâtaram!
Thou art my muse, Thyself my creed;
In Thee my heart and soul;
And in my limbs the spirit Thou!
In mine arm Thou art strength (shakti);
Thyself heart's devotion (bhakti);
Thine the images bodied forth
In temples one and all, Mother!"

To worship Durgâ is to worship Motherland; or, to worship Motherland is to worship Durga. This is the cult that in diverse forms has been invented by the brain and soul of India from the Vedic age of the adoration of World-Forces down to the present epoch of neo-Tantrism represented by Bankimchandra and Râmakriṣṇa-Vivekânanda.[1]

[1] *Vide* Max Müller's *Râmakrishna: His Life and Teachings* (Scribner, New York).

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Gamgâdhara.
Hara.
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Mahâdeva.
Maheshwara.
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